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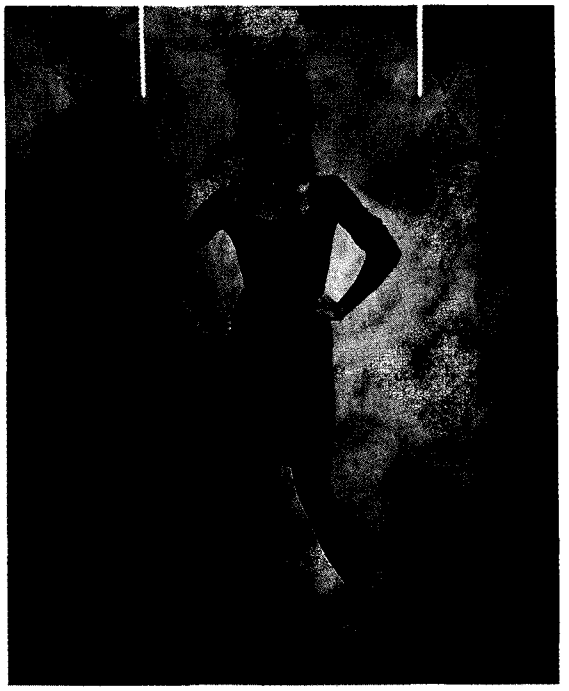

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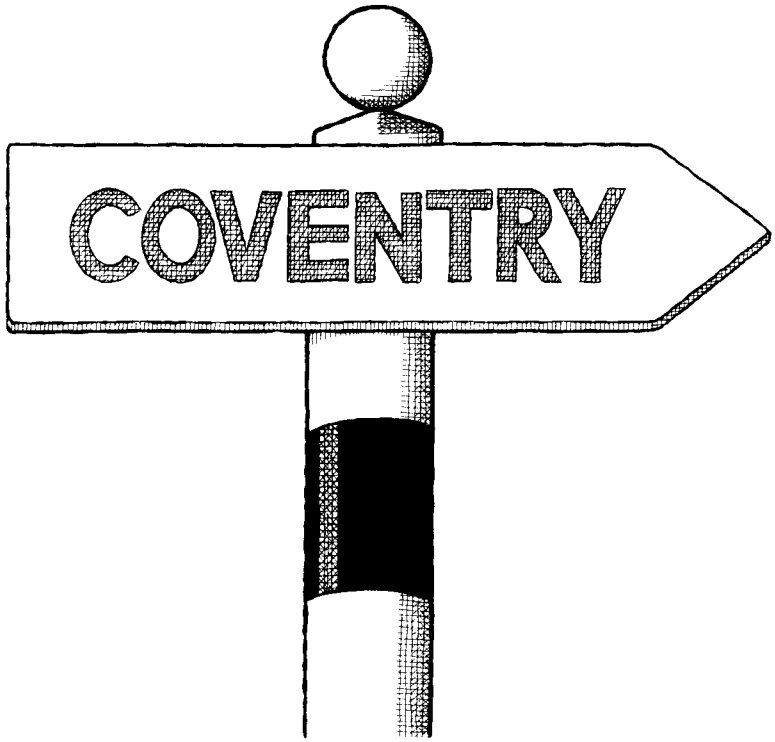

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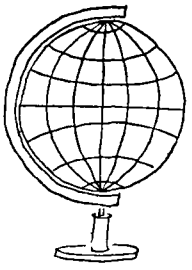
The Climate of Fear

A Symposium



THE WESTERN WORLD appears to be undergoing one of its periodical losses of confidence. In previous generations such moods were associated with Thomas Hardy's "time of the breaking of nations" and Spenglerian "gloom and doom" . . . with Anne Lindbergh's "wave of the future" and Toynbee's challenge and no-response . . . with Unamuno's tragic sense of life and death and Sidney Hook's "failure of nerve" . . . with Orwell's "1984" . . . with the Club of Rome's "year zero". In general, with what Auden termed "the age of anxiety".

Not that it is something new. One of Shakespeare's spokesmen had an early (if not the last) word:

> *"They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless. Hence it is that we make trifles of terrors, ensconcing ourselves into seeming knowledge, when we should submit ourselves to an unknown fear."* (ALL'S WELL, *II, iii*)

In our own day, the "seeming knowledge" is of known fears.

In addition to the perennial fear of Soviet expansionism and nuclear war, the mass media—intellectual journalism as well as the popular press and television—have recently been full of other anxieties. About nuclear energy in the wake of Chernobyl; about the depletion of the earth's resources; about AIDS and other sex-related disasters. The population explosion in the rest of the world; demographic decline in Europe; environmental and atmospheric pollution; the spread of terrorism and the growth of urban violence. Not to overlook drugs; continued technological unemployment; industrial competition from the Far East; Third World debts and their effect on Western monetary stability; and, last but not least, divisiveness in US foreign policy and the fragile cohesion of the Atlantic Alliance. . . .

In view of what we sense as an historic "climate of fear", we asked a number of writers and scholars for their comments, by way of a necessarily schematic questionnaire. Would they react to the following questions? Not necessarily by answering each one doggedly, but using them as a peg for their own thoughts.

1. Is there a crisis of "confidence in civilisation", such as the above suggests? Is it justified?

2. What, in your view, are the deeper sources and/or root causes? Or could the apocalyptic mood be yet another trend in our modern malaise?

3. Are there any other real dangers of comparable significance which we haven't noted?

4. How much basic importance do you ascribe to "underlying factors" such as:

> **". . . chaotic economic systems . . . primitive political ideologies . . . social contradictions between bureaucrats, big governments, and private individual welfare . . . a loss of faith in the religions Churches preach . . . imbalance between liberty and license . . . materialism . . . relapses from the burdens of civilised civic restraints . . . cycles of decline and fall in history (Nietzsche's 'eternal recurrences'). . . ."**

5. Finally, what if anything can or should be done about the "climate of fear" or its specific occasions? And on whom, in particular, does responsibility rest for action, for "doing something about it"?

M.J.L./R.M.

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Acids of Tiredness

By George Steiner

IT IS DIFFICULT to think, in any generation, of any thinking man or woman who has not, since that trouble in Eden, experienced uneasiness or anguish regarding human conditions. The simple fact of personal death, the ubiquity of disease, of pain, of individual and collective inhumanity in private and political existence, make fear and bewilderment inevitable. These are the goad to thought.

If there is, today, an "apocalyptic mood" or, more accurately, a Western intimation of decline, of negative entropy in the dynamics of individual and collective hope, the reasons lie to hand. History has always been more or less barbarous. But the media of instant and graphic communication bring such barbarism home to us as never before.

Secondly, the horrors of mass extermination and totalitarian rule as they characterise our century have come *after* a certain period of relative progress, of more or less justified optimism. Our dismay is proportionate to the Jeffersonian or Arnoldian optimism of the Enlightenment and of that (partial, middle-class) armistice with history enjoyed by Western Europe between Waterloo and the hecatombs of 1916-17.

There is, thirdly, our awareness of the rapid devastation of the fauna, flora, and ecological balance of the planet. The "apocalyptic", the sense of an ending, is that of seemingly irreversible pollution.

The threat of nuclear warfare may be receding. The somewhat unexpected sources of nearing crisis may be quite otherwise (history is an ironist, contemptuous of secular calculations). They may come from a breakdown of the international monetary and credit system, or from the pandemic virulence of the kind of "mutant virus" diseases of which AIDS could be only a relatively benign herald.

Lenin's constant "What, then, shall we do?" (not that he invented the phrase) mocks one. The scale and complication of the pertinent factors, the multiplicity and irreconcilable validity of conflicting interests, are such as to numb reason. There are, manifestly, things to be done on the local and regional level; in educational reform; in the rescue of this-or-that remnant of the natural world; in the reopening of the democratic process (notably in the United States) to those not privileged by great wealth. A meaningful union of Europe is absurdly overdue. A Luddite insurgence against the insanity and cynicism of the armstrade is just conceivable. But it is not easy to believe that even such ameliorations would impede the "anti-messianic" mechanisms of human self-destruction.

No one is competent to rule on whether such mechanisms lodge within the very fabric of our biological and psychological identity (other and, apparently, even more adaptive species have become extinct). It is my own hunch—but no more than that—that the particular intensity of current uneasiness, of the complex of intuitions which underlies your questions, tells of an epilogue to a religious-metaphysical order of imagining and social practice. Ours is, very precisely, a period, possibly of transition, in which the constraints and promises of authentic religious faith are less and less respectably available, while the decay, the wastage, of the religious millennia is still lying about in our psyche, in our language, in a good many of our institutions. Exhausted or moribund muscular tissue secretes acids of tiredness into the bloodstream. Something of this kind may be occurring now.

But there were, after all, wolves in the streets of cities in the centre of Europe at the close of the Thirty Years' War. If man is a rabid creature, he is also a tenacious one. There are living Jews, and Hiroshima is a booming city.

Virtues of Fear

By Maurice Cranston

A "CLIMATE OF FEAR" might not be an altogether bad thing. Thomas Hobbes suggests that fear of anarchy prompted men to introduce systems of law in the first place, and fear may still be needed to keep those systems in being. It is a commonplace that fear of nuclear destruction has prevented World War III from breaking out.

There is plainly not enough fear today among the lawless elements in society—whether high-class delinquents or hooligans and muggers—of the penalties attached to prosecution; they are simply not afraid to run the risks of being caught. Hence the modern state is less and less able to do what it is supposed to exist in order to do, namely to secure the rights of the people to life, liberty, and property. Society indeed seems not to be afraid of allowing convicted murderers, rapists, and the like to move around freely after a very few years in prison. Nineteenth-century liberals had not the same strength of nerve. John Stuart Mill warned his contemporaries against the dangers that would follow the abolition of the death penalty, if that penalty were not replaced by imprisonment until the day of natural death.

If people are really afraid of AIDS they will act in ways to limit their exposure to infection, however strong the libidinous drive to do things that expose them to infection. Fear must be a strong enough emotion to prevail over lust, and that means it must be pretty strong. It is no good a person "knowing" that certain behaviour is hazardous, as smokers "know" that cigarette-smoking is hazardous while continuing to smoke; one must be so perfectly terrorised by the thought of AIDS that one can avoid the things that expose one to infection. In a word, more fear is called for, not less.

In England the rich are no longer afraid of the poor; I believe it was Harold Macmillan who said, "The class war is over, and we have won it." So the British pay three million unemployed a dole to keep them idle in perpetuity. In the 17th century another liberal, John Locke, was extremely troubled by the extent of unemployment, and proposed in the interests of good order in the Kingdom to put the men to work on schemes of national importance.

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The Americans are no longer afraid of Communism, so that today's average US politician seems happier to tolerate the thought of Soviet bases in Central America than he is to tolerate any kind of "covert operations" designed to forestall their implantation.

I believe the world was a better place when men were afraid of God's wrath. There was doubtless just as much villainy as there is today, but there were fewer easy consciences, fewer unfeeling, unthinking, uncaring, crude hedonistic souls of the sort we see mirrored in current literature and art.

What is the evidence for there being "a climate of fear"? All the indicators seem to me to point to a climate of ostrich-like unwillingness to look at danger (something Arthur Koestler noted years ago): a climate of grim, false cheerfulness.

Assenting to the Devil

By D. J. Enright

HEREWITH, DOGGEDLY, answers of sorts to your questions as they arise.

(*1*) Bad things and vicious people make one think: Yes, "a crisis of confidence in civilisation", and yes, it is justified. Then good things and decent people cause one to hesitate. This vacillation happens from day to day, even from hour to hour. Personally I never heard the word "civilisation" until I was grown-up; and I didn't always trust those who used it. "Civilisation" is what the neutron bombs are supposed to leave intact.

(*2*) The "deeper source" goes back a long way, back to those perverse doings in Eden. Some call it "original sin". Its manifestations have grown more extreme since the celebrated death of God, since no one or nothing has come along to replace him. The Churches have even helped to discredit the idea of *belief*, belief in anything other than material well-being. We shrink away from the word *idealism*, and *disinterested* means nothing more than "bored". And yet, and yet, people, "ordinary people", respond swiftly and generously to natural and man-made disasters: charity, at least, isn't cold yet.

(*3*) One notable danger is that one may die oneself.

> *Still, individual culture is also something, and no man*
> *Finds quite distinct the assurance that he of all others is called on,*
> *Or would be justified, even, in taking away from the world that*
> *Precious creature, himself. Nature sent him here to abide here,*
> *Else why sent him at all?*

Most potent is the continuous sense of disgrace, rubbed in by communications technology. "The man who laughs has simply not yet heard the terrible news"—is there such a man today? (Only those afflicted by Down's syndrome, who seem to have strayed in from the prelapsarian Garden.) Wars, persecutions, and—*worse* than any single phenomenon mentioned in your list of fears and anxieties—child abuse, the rape, torture, and killing of children. . . . Does a race capable of throwing up individuals, not so rare, who can do such things, deserve to survive? That, rather than the threat to survival, seems to me the question.

There is some truth in Czeslaw Milosz's remark that "Today those who do not believe in God are vastly outnumbered by those who, by reason of historical experiences, assent to the devil. . . ."

(*4*) One man's "rights" are generally another man's wrongs. . . . No doubt the world could do with statesmen instead of party politicians. But where are we to find the great statesmen of our imaginings, and the art of something better than the merely "possible"? Democracy is declining into a free-for-all, on the verge of chaos. We may yearn for firm government—under which only those thoroughly and disinterestedly convinced of the truth, justice, and importance of their cause would agitate—but, as we know, the line between firmness and brutality is a thin one, uncertainly located. Instability is preferable to some forms of stability.

(*5*) I don't know. A large-scale war would pull the world together, except that there would be little of it left to pull. I see no prompt and total cure of our ills, no voluntary and significant change of heart. Maybe we shall drag on, from "small war on the heels of small war", through plague and famine, good and evil battling it out as ever, until something happens to chasten or terrify us. Not the end of the world—though our leaders do seem distinctly less indisposed than most of us to contemplate that possibility—but some kind of shortish sharp shock. AIDS may serve as an emblem. Or perhaps George Herbert's lines, where God speaks of man's "repining restlessness", give a hint:

> *at least,*
> *If goodness lead him not, yet weariness*
> *May toss him to my breast.*

Fearing Fear Itself

By Max Beloff

I FIND this talk of a crisis of "confidence in civilisation" vastly exaggerated. In all periods of history there have been people for whom real or imagined challenges to their feeling of security resulted in giving ear to prophets of doom. Some people expected the world to end in the year 1000. In the 14th and early 15th century, the ravages of the Black Death and war produced a darkening of mood reflected in religious life and in the arts. The population of France, for instance, halved over this period—modern times have seen no equivalent within the confines of the civilised world. Yet at all times the majority of people have continued to lead their ordinary working lives, seeking subsistence for themselves

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and their families and not ceasing to procreate out of fear of the future. I see no difference today. I do not come across people—perhaps because I do not live among intellectuals—who allow their own lives and strivings to be affected by the issues you suggest.

The "apocalyptic mood" as you describe it does not need "deeper sources" for an explanation. At any period of change there will be individuals, and sometimes by contagion whole groups, who seek to avoid responsibility by opting out of real life and indulging in the search for individual holiness or social experiment, often ending in cathartic violence. The 16th century is full of such instances. Other individuals may through writing or preaching encourage such doom-laden attitudes and make money or fame for themselves in the process. What distinguishes the present climate is the availability of new instruments for creating and exploiting fear—and in particular television, where actuality and invention can be combined to create and exploit mental confusion about what is real and what is not.

Since you talk only of the Western world, what seems to me missing from the analysis is the extent to which the fears of which you speak, notably fear of nuclear war and nuclear power in general, are not things that have happened to come to the surface, but things directly stimulated by propaganda from sources hostile to the West. It is obviously in the Soviet Union's interest to stir up fears of nuclear weapons which might assist its diplomacy, since it has no difficulty in containing whatever fears its own peoples may have on this score. Chernobyl worries were encouraged by "Greens" in the West for honest if misguided reasons, but also by the pro-Soviet Arthur Scargill because nuclear energy means the disappearance of the stranglehold that coal-miners can otherwise exercise over a country's economy. The Soviet Union—the scene of Chernobyl—presses on with nuclear power.

Your list of "underlying factors" is no different from what could have been said of any previous period of history—at least since the Industrial Revolution. Rapid technological change is bound to affect social and governmental relations. The problems are always insoluble, taken together, or we would all live in Utopia. Science eliminates some diseases and is then confronted by others hitherto absent or unrecognised. Liberty and license are always liable to overlap, and will be differently regarded at different times. The pendulum is always swinging. Religious observance and secularisation are also found to alternate. It may be said that religious observance is less than it used to be—though one must be careful to qualify the observation in terms of place and class. At the moment, secularisation seems the more obvious element; yet against this must be set the powerful moves towards religious orthodoxy in all the three great monotheistic religions. People are not normally despairing, but as soon as they satisfy basic needs they itch for change. One must beware of taking changes at their face value. One should keep in mind the history of female fashions of dress. Low *décolletage* and long skirts—or high necks and short skirts. The proportion of the female body exposed to view remains the same.

Since I find "the climate of fear" something I do not recognise in daily life, I find it hard to see what if anything should be done to deal with those circles in which it seems to flourish. I would not myself wish to ban those writers or journals who encourage such feelings; though I would not exactly "fight to the death" to keep alive *The Guardian, The Observer, The New Statesman,* or *New Society*. I would prefer to see some form of immunisation against their inculcation of fear by making history a compulsory (indeed *the* compulsory) element in all education.

But where Britain is concerned, do we need to worry at all? In the June election, the Labour campaign was largely directed to evoking fears for the future—the voters preferred something more robust. Probably they always will.

The East's "West"

By Milovan Djilas

I WAS MOULDED by a different environment, and so I have been obsessed with its own difficulties. Consequently I look at the West in a different way from the theses articulated by ENCOUNTER for its symposium "The Climate of Fear", for in order to understand a particular world one must, after all, live in it.

In short, from which I am, in one of the most tolerable of Communist states—indeed, until recently, the most tolerable—the "capitalist" West, although not ideal, appears incomparably better organised, more efficient, and even to enjoy better historic prospects than the "Communist" East. I would go further. There has never been a social situation, as exists nowadays in Western societies, where inhabitants of so many nations or countries, let alone an entire civilisation, have been guaranteed their basic material and spiritual requirements. That some are unhappy is natural and understandable, but very often a "short memory" decouples the present situation from history, deeming it worse than it actually is. Let us not forget Europe between the World Wars with its horrific crises and "salutary" dictatorships which partially destroyed it and drowned it in blood. And even the so-called Third World is no worse off than the old "colonial world", at least not everywhere and not in the long term. Violence and exploitation, death from hunger and wars are inevitable during the transition from a patriarchal to an industrial society. Is not the Third World, in its own way, "repeating" the more protracted history of the West?

My approach to the West also stems from the fact that I read Western thinkers (Nietzsche, Spengler, Unamuno, *et al.*) as good literature and stimulating philosophy; but I have never, and surely not today, appreciated their apocalyptic visions as the observation of certain destructive tragic features which have a form and meaning specific to the West but which are none the less universal. It seems to me incontrovertible that the West, or more precisely "Europe", has performed a crucial role in "understanding the world" and "changing the world", but still I do not consider Western values to be either all-inclusive or definitive.

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THE TIMES
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The borders and influences between civilisations, between ways of perceiving and creativity, are neither clear nor permanent. Today when we use the terms "West" and "East" we usually mean the political and social divisions between "Capitalism" and "Socialism", between democracy and dictatorship. But in doing so we lose sight of the fact that we are really talking of common spiritual achievements and of similar ways of life, of the same civilisation which has been divided by force. We do not have to dwell on the fact that Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary are undoubtedly "Western"; or that Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria are "semi-Western"; and, in my opinion, that the Soviet Union (or at least its Slav element) is also "Western".

All these countries' most vital and creative aspects which existed, and have survived, testify to this. Moreover, although Russian socialism in its Bolshevik praxis may be associated with Oriental despotic forms, it is without doubt an essentially "Western" idea. The Leninist "russification of European ideas" were "asiaticised" by Stalinism. It is clear from both theory and practice that Communism was (and could only be) moderately effective as a transition from feudal/semi-colonial formations to industrial-national ones; and then only on the understanding that it is inappropriate, destructive, and hopeless as a long-term and lasting economic and social creation.

I don't want to be misunderstood, I do not wish to say that the West should have more "understanding" for Communist systems, nor that the time has come for the "liberation" of subjugated peoples and nations. What is important for the West (above all, Western Europe and the USA) is not to harbour any illusions about impending radical changes in the Soviet Union or an erosion of Soviet military strength. But neither must it hinder the democratising process in Communist countries by inflexible attitudes and ideologies. To a certain extent such a Western position should be easier to understand and more viable because it represents a continuity of its orientation which has, in the long run, proved successful. If the West is more stable and prosperous, does not this fact, in contrast to the structural crisis in Communist states and Parties, confirm that the West has been victorious both in the "Cold War" and in "Peaceful Coexistence"?

From here—inside the Communist world, and seen from this angle—the problems and crises of the West look like the problems and crises of transformation—difficulties, sometimes great, sometimes small, of a vital, dynamic social organism. If a society is more open and its freedoms more unrestrained, then its various peripheral excesses become more uncontrollable and visible. I think of terrorism and of the so-called sexual revolution. Terrorism is a political danger as long as government and people are not adequately organised to meet it. The "sexual revolution" is dangerous when it begins to jeopardise the family or the national health, etc. The greater, more essential problems are those of pollution, of a birth rate which is too high (or too low), a shortage (or excess) of food, lack of raw materials, and so on. But these problems, at least as I see and feel them, are not crucial for social systems and civilisations: they can be solved, and sometimes definitively.

I see the perspectives and solutions for the West in a combination of its values and its openness toward "foreign" values—in the development of its humanist and humanitarian activities—in social solidarity and social justice—and in its rejection of dogmatic legacies and ossified forms. The West has the strength, the brains, and the institutions for this. It should use these rationally as it has done at decisive moments of its long history. It should use them all the more bravely and responsibly, since the courses which mankind takes today are fatefully dependent on the West, its attitudes, its achievements, its bearing.

Confidence

HERE IS my answer to your symposium: I find it easy to join your questions together and give one reply.

No, there is no "crisis of confidence in civilisation". There were signs of it in the 1970s. In the 1980s, if anything, I see a decade of new confidence. This is not to say that there are no risks. Naive emphasis on economic growth has created new entitlement problems like persistent unemployment, and the underclass. Economic growth itself is uncertain, and needs encouragement. These risks for the OECD countries occur at a time in which the world order is crumbling. There is little effective cooperation between the rich, and even less between the rich and the poor.

None of this, however, justifies secular fears, or even the notion of a crisis of legitimation.

Ralf Dahrendorf

Doom & Tomb

By Eric Rhode

I REMEMBER people crying in the streets at the news that France had fallen. I was aged six. Under awkward circumstances, my family had managed to get out of Mussolini's Italy. We were in Sainte-Maxime. One morning, on the beach and by a wall, my younger brother and I found ourselves crouching behind my father as a dog-fight took place overhead. A plane, spurting fire, dropped into a nearby orchard—my first sobering perception of death. Experiences as exacting were to follow, but they were as nothing when compared to the sufferings of others at this time.

In a strange sense, I now realise, history began for me in 1945, with the attempt to try and understand a possibly incomprehensible past; and this starting-point still remains useful in trying to test out feelings concerning the present. What impresses me about Chernobyl, the AIDS epidemic, etc., is the generous and efficient way in which agencies and individuals have set out to resolve these problems. Since the days of the Marshall Plan, the obligation effectively to respond to emergencies has been a part of Western culture and of Western optimism; people don't necessarily abandon themselves to despondency or appeasement—one lesson at least that we might have learnt from the 1930s:

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> "In the first week in June, with the great battle raging in France, Virginia with Rose Macaulay and Kingsley Martin sat talking after dinner until 2.30 in the morning. Kingsley, 'diffusing his soft charcoal gloom', prophesied the defeat of the French and the invasion of Britain within five weeks. A Fifth Column would get to work; the Government would move off to Canada leaving us to a German pro-Consul, a concentration camp, or suicide. We discussed suicide while the electric light gradually faded and finally left us sitting in complete darkness. . . ."
>
> Leonard Woolf, *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters* (Hogarth Press, 1969), p.54.

Consider, in contrast, Bruno Bettelheim, when committed to a Nazi death camp, getting a grip on a seemingly unthinkable-about situation by seeing it as the pretext for that disagreeable activity known as *thinking*.

Whatever is "waning" now, it certainly is not the Middle Ages. May I, to cheer you up a little, quote Huizinga on the churchyard of the Innocents at Paris—we don't have it *quite* like this now.

> "There the medieval soul, fond of a religious shudder, could take its fill of the horrible. The cemetery was preferred to every other place of burial. It was necessary, in order to make room, to dig up the bones and sell the tombstones after a short time. Skulls and bones were heaped up in charnel-houses. Under the cloisters the death-dance exhibited its images and its stanzas. No place was better suited to the simian figure of grinning death, dragging along pope and emperor, monk and fool. Shops were established before the charnel-houses and prostitutes strolled under the cloisters. A female recluse was immured on one of the sides of the church."
>
> J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (1924)

Guide to the Labyrinth

By Anthony Hartley

"*Nous autres, civilisations, nous savons maintenant que nous sommes mortelles.*" It was Paul Valéry who, in 1919, summed up, in one of his crystalline phrases, the shock inflicted on Europe by the First World War. By the time of his death in 1945 he had witnessed a breakdown in civilised behaviour on a scale which he had hardly foreseen.

Since the Second World War the Western world has known a switchback of hope and depression. Between 1945 and 1971 American energy succeeded in pushing other countries into purposeful and successful activity. Economic growth, technological innovation, an increasing libertarianism in thought and behaviour: all helped to create an impression that there was endless pie in a not-too-distant sky. A system protected by American power and nurtured by American-inspired institutions seemed to be capable of unlimited improvement. Hyper-optimism prevailed, with Herman Kahn pointing out the coming wonders of The Year Two Thousand and businessmen predicting, with a gleam in their eye, that by then there would be a hundred nuclear power-stations along the Mississippi.

Came the cold dawn in the early 1970s. American defeat in Viet Nam, the 1973 energy crisis, increasing chaos in the Third World, the spread of terrorism: all combined to darken the horizon. But the pessimism these things aroused was more a reaction from the excessive optimism of the 1960s, when no bounds were perceived to human ambitions, than a fundamentally altered view of the universe. Soon the Western world came to realise that things were not quite as bad as they seemed. The experience had been more like a bad hangover than a terminal illness. By the end of the decade the sufferer was sitting up and swallowing prairie oysters.

Headaches, however, still continued, and by the 1980s Western man had serious cause to meditate upon the relationship between the world around him and the rational positivism on which his previous achievements had been based. Ecology taught him that his impact on the natural environment had been such as to create a series of threats to his own well-being. Poison, so he was informed, was in the food that he ate, in the water in which he bathed, in the air that he breathed. A dark shadow fell across the pleasure that he took in the countryside, as he reflected that birds, animals, and wild flowers were dying out. Acid rain spoiled his enjoyment of forests. Nightmares came to him over the television screen, as Chernobyl realised his worst fears.

The result of these discoveries was two-fold. First, science and technology, the great instruments of man's attempt to change himself, no longer appeared as benevolent and helpful genii, but as demonic forces on the rampage after being released by an unwary humanity. Secondly, nature, perverted and polluted by technology, began to lose the aura of Wordsworthian innocence imparted to it by a post-Christian hedonism. It too began to reek of man's imperfections.

The coming of AIDS, an incurable plague in a century which had believed itself immune to such visitations, was a direct and brutal reminder of the potential hostility of nature. "Liberated" sexuality, based on an equation between nature and sensual pleasure, has now met an adversary more deadly than the disapproval of moralists. The simple pleasures of the Polynesian long-hut suddenly became risky, and, curiously, the ecological argument was reversed. Surrender to the sexual urge became dangerous, mortal even. "Natural" food preserves us; "natural" sex could kill us.

Thus, within a decade, belief in the benevolence of nature and in the inevitability of scientific progress, the two sources of optimism for 20th-century man, has been undermined. Instead of being the monarch of nature, heir to an inexhaustible toy-cupboard of pleasures and possessions, he finds himself the object of grim warnings and prophecies on all sides. Much has been lost and more has been spoiled for him. No wonder fear and depression accompany him on his way.

Yet reason should tell him that all this is no more than a sudden reminder of the basic conditions of human existence. Sickness and death, the devastation brought about by human

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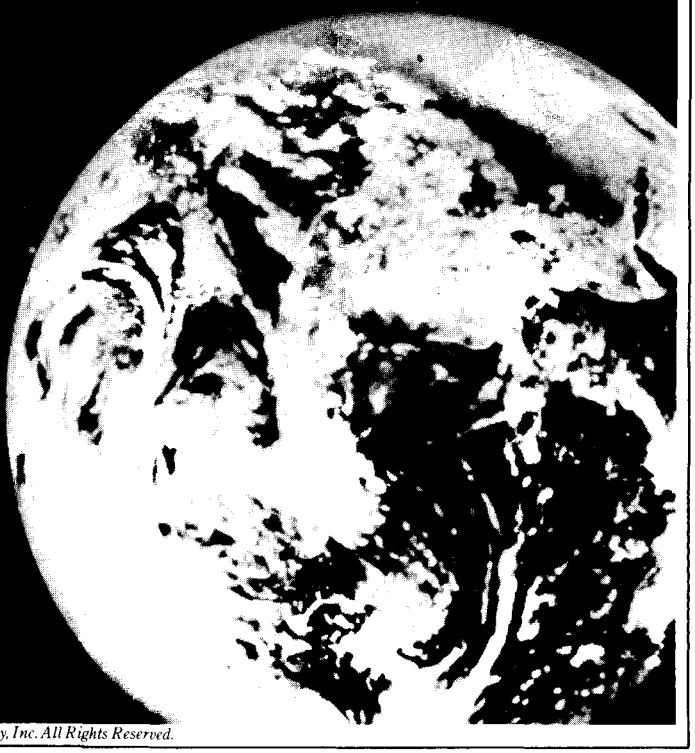

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folly or wickedness, are recurring facts of history. There have been plagues in the past, and they have been overcome, as, no doubt, AIDS will be. For all its destructive power, industrial technology has done more to help mankind than to afflict it. We should not despair of correcting our errors or disciplining our behaviour, though the dizzy patterns of change have led us to neglect the reassurance to be found in the past. Remedies were found for the misery caused by the Industrial Revolution; and Shakespeare attained the serenity of his final plays untroubled by the arrival of syphilis.

In 1987 Western man finds himself drifting, rather than navigating, towards what have become The Terrors of the Year Two Thousand. Unlike his medieval predecessors, who claimed to have seen the skies rain blood before the earlier millennium, he has no transcendental belief to lead him through the labyrinth of fear. Self-knowledge must be his only guide. If he attains it, then he can be unmoved by the alternance of hope and dread which the Protean outlines of the contemporary world have imposed upon him.

No Grand Design

By Peter Jenkins

WHAT climate of fear? Nuclear anxiety is the most pervasive perhaps, but much more remarkable than the numbers which sporadically press into the streets to protest their survival are the vastly greater numbers who sleep easily in their beds in the belief that nuclear weapons *do* deter and that we have come to be blessed by eternal peace. Or, to put it a little lower, if nuclear war is "unthinkable" then why think about it? Much of modern existence seems to me to be like this, like flying—the mind can grasp the dangers well enough but the statistics are encouraging and, in any case, there is no point in being anxious, so turn up the music on the Walkman during the life-jacket routine.

If we want to be anxious, the place to start is at the meeting point of technological omniscience and human fallibility. That was the parable of Chernobyl: human incompetence knows no bounds. Yet, when we put our minds to something. . . .

Compare the world's record in nuclear safety with the world's record in mining safety, or in space safety with air safety, or air safety with road safety. And, after all, the religion of our century has been the omniscience of science and technology in solving problems, a faith which has survived (in Europe) two slaughters, greatly facilitated by science and technology, as well as the invention of nuclear weapons. In other words, we are inclined to blame man and not God for what goes on in the world, and in this century the God technology has the infinitely better record. In our corner of the world we are not wrong to suppose ourselves the beneficiaries of an age of progress: the experience of our lives makes it self-evidently so.

But we are invited here to worry about the things which intellectuals like to worry about—judging from your list, to worry about just about everything although you suggest the possibility that we have nothing to worry about but worry itself. That I suppose to be the meaning of *Angst*. But there is no need to worry even about *Angst* until it becomes overwhelming and politically morbid, and I see no sign of that anywhere in the West at the moment. Rather, the economic difficulties experienced by the industrialised democracies since 1973 have demonstrated an encouraging resilience of their political societies as well as some continuing ability to adapt and prosper economically.

In Britain, if I am allowed to be so parochial, I have worried for some years that persistent economic decline would in the end result in some form of political breakdown. However, that danger seems to be less in 1987 than in 1979. One of the frailities of Western civilisation is its dependence upon perpetual economic advance; and one fears that, beneath the skin, we are no more civilised than ever we were. On a global scale I would put the economic danger much higher than the danger of nuclear holocaust or any other. Yet once more we should remember that the technical capabilities available to us for the avoidance of another 1929 are grounds for hope not for despair.

A question perhaps relevant to the inquiry is whether modern societies can live by incrementalism alone. For that does seem to me to be something new. I have called faith in technology the religion of the 20th century but, more exactly, should have called it our superstition. Religions in the form of hope-systems offering salvation either in heaven or on earth play little role these days. (I am not speaking of Islam, only of the West.) The god Socialism, even in his gradualist manifestation, has entered the Valhalla of earlier transcendental politics. Those who rejoiced (prematurely) in "the End of Ideology" will welcome this development; but others may wonder, even worry, how societies are to find the patience to be governed freely without the hope of becoming something else and something better than they are. For the first time since the French Revolution there is no grand design on offer.

Millennia of Anxiety

By William H. McNeill

TO SOMEONE just old enough to remember the crash of 1929, the world's political-economic situation in 1987 seems ominously similar. On the other hand, we have learned a great deal since 1929 about how to manage a flow-through economy, and it is therefore unlikely that parallel circumstances (if they *are* parallel) will have similar consequences. Foresight and counter-measures, of course, may simply prepare the way for some other sort of catastrophe. One cannot be sure.

Yet this uncertainty about the future is the price of posses-

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sing skills and knowledge that permit us to alter the natural and human environment to suit our will. It is part of the human condition. Ever since our ancestors began to tinker with the ecosystem around them by concerted, deliberate effort—burning grasslands to encourage game or the like—human beings have lived in an artificial world. Just because that world departed from natural balances, it became liable to some sort of failure whenever unforeseen side-effects or something new, from outside, intruded to interrupt the smooth connection between human intention and achieved result.

Because our world is so very complicated, and has changed so very rapidly in recent decades, the possibilities for catastrophic breakdown are greater than ever before. But our capacities to repair and forestall catastrophe are also greater than ever before. On the whole, across millennia, human skills have prevailed. More often than not, humans have been able to alter the world in ways they liked, controlling unforeseen disasters as they occurred, if not at once, then after no more than a few lifetimes.

There is no compelling reason to suppose this will not continue to be the case in our time, and for centuries to come, even though the stakes are certainly higher today than was true in earlier centuries. Collapse of the world as we know it *is* possible—and very quickly. Awareness of that fact naturally arouses anxiety. But anxiety is entirely normal. For nearly two millennia, most of our ancestors lived in expectation of an early end of the world by divine intervention. Secular visions of atomic or some other apocalypse are remarkably similar to the prophecies of the *Book of Revelations*. If our predecessors could live with that hanging over their heads, believers and unbelievers of the 20th century can surely do the same.

A Short Absurdist Sermon

By John Weightman

I AM UNCOMFORTABLE with negative expressions such as "the decline of the West", "climate of fear", "age of anxiety", and so forth, because they suggest, with a mixture of moral outrage and contemporary self-pity, that there were in the past totally positive periods, when fear and anxiety were not prevalent and life was satisfactory for the mass of the people. This is, in a diffuse form, the myth of the Golden Age, a concept which cannot be reconciled with evolutionism; and I take evolutionism to be our only plausible historical hypothesis, in spite of all the incidental difficulties with which it is still beset.

As far as my reading goes, even in the so-called "great" periods, the majority of the population in most countries was never much better off than the slaves of the Pharoahs. Until very recently, comfort and culture were limited to the few. Besides, life itself, however enjoyable it can be, is not only incomprehensible in its essence but also contains features quite shocking to average human sensibility, and so has always seemed inherently tragic to reflective men and women. No doubt this will always be the case, unless the heavens suddenly open and we are let into the secret of creation.

I have given up hope of this happening in my lifetime. Meanwhile, I have often thought that the Christian Church should be prosecuted under the advertising laws, because its so-called Revelation reveals absolutely nothing. Churches, whatever their claims, are just wailing-walls for the exhalation of Absurdist emotion. A few weeks ago, I watched the Archbishop of Canterbury making a tragi-comic attempt, in his cathedral and in front of the assembled worthies of the nation, to say something meaningful about the Channel Ferry disaster, without actually putting the blame on God, or on man, God's handiwork. As I listened to those rich, wobbly tones, so expressive of faith trembling on the brink of disbelief, I reflected that if there were a Church which was frankly, and not just half-heartedly, Absurdist, I might be tempted to join it.

In some respects life does not change. Earthquakes, floods, droughts, accidents, etc.—all the disturbing "acts of God"—have to be accepted like the weather, and struggled against as emergencies. Similarly with disease in general. AIDS is only slightly more dramatic than syphilis used to be. If, and when, it is conquered, some new scourge will presumably appear, not because God invents fresh ways of punishing the wicked—the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester is probably alone in clinging to that archaic belief—but because the force which drives the universe shows no discernible preference for any one of the various units of life it has set in competition with each other. Being human, we assume that the human unit is paramount; but this is only a necessary prejudice, not an objective truth. In the inscrutable economy of the cosmos, a virus may take precedence over a film-star or a philosopher, so goodbye Rock Hudson and Michel Foucault.

In some other respects, we are at once better off, and worse off, than our forebears, and the good and the bad may be interdependent, and consequently difficult to disentangle. Thanks to scientific progress and the spread of democratic principles, the mass of the population in the Western world has come to enjoy a level of prosperity inconceivable only a century or so ago. In England, even the unemployed are now better provided for, materially, than were the working-class families I lived in as a child. If this encouraging fact has not produced all the happiness that might have been expected, the reason is that man does not live by bread alone. Once his belly is full and his yoke is loosened, he begins to think; and thought may lead, in the first instance, as much to uneasiness and confusion as to understanding.

Democracy is dangerous, being used on the principle of fairness, it releases to the full the conflicting appetites and the inequalities of intelligence and moral percipience imprinted in human nature. It is a Pandora's Box, as well as a civilised achievement by men of good will. Authoritarian systems would always be preferable on grounds of simplicity and order, if they hadn't their own peculiar disadvantages. In a

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very real sense, democratic politics is the continuation of civil war by other means; the men of good will well know that even they, in slightly altered circumstances, might find themselves at each other's throats. Terrorism has become a specific affliction of democracy because it is a sporadic return to undeclared war on the part of individuals or groups too benighted, or too metaphysically impatient, to accept the means of politics as a curb on our animal nature.

Science, the source of our prosperity, is also dangerous. Scientific inventiveness, the fruit of the *libido sciendi*, man's most impartial impulse, has its own impetus, which cuts across, or intertwines with, politics. Scientists are Sorcerer's Apprentices, tinkering with a world that they, or the politicians who apply their findings, or the laymen who mishandle them, may ruin by accident. Since Chernobyl, it is obvious that, even without a war, life could be blacked out over large areas. I was disappointed that the present Russian leader, who sounds as if he might be an empirical Absurdist, missed the opportunity of emphasising this to the world at large, and of apologising to Russia's neighbours.

Since human nature itself partakes of the Absurdist nature of the universe, the solving of any one problem necessarily leads to the appearance of another, and the process can have no end. As Camus said, Sisyphus has constantly to roll his stone uphill again. But he can be cheerful about this, once he understands how interesting stone-pushing can be—and that it is the fundamental human enterprise, to be shared equitably with his fellows.

Sound democracy, if it ever comes into being, will be based neither on the Pelagianism of neo-Christian socialism nor on the would-be totalising metaphysics of Marxism, but on the general acceptance, in an optimistic spirit, of tragic Absurdism, which retains a healthy, poetic sense of the mystery of things, while discarding the childish, dogmatic assertions that have always disfigured religion.

Recurrence

"ROBBERS ABOUND. . . . **No one ploughs the land. People are saying: 'We do not know what will happen from day to day.' . . . Dirt prevails everywhere, and no longer does anyone wear clean raiment. . . . The country is spinning round and round like a potter's wheel. . . . Slave-women are wearing necklaces of gold and lapis lazuli. . . . No more do we hear anyone laugh. . . . Great men and small agree in saying: 'Would that I had never been born.' . . . Well-to-do persons are set to turn millstones. . . . Ladies have to demean themselves to the tasks of serving-women. . . . People are so famished that they snatch what falls from the mouths of swine. . . . The offices where records are kept have been broken into and plundered . . . and the documents of the scribes have been destroyed. . . . Moreover, certain foolish persons have bereft the country of the monarchy; . . . no public office stands open where it should, and the masses are like timid sheep without a shepherd. . . . Artists have ceased to ply their art. . . . The few slay the many. . . . One who yesterday was indigent is now wealthy, and the sometime rich overwhelm him with adulation. . . . Impudence is rife. . . . Oh that man could cease to be, that women should no longer conceive and give birth. Then, at length, the world would find peace."**

From an ancient Egyptian papyrus, dated more than 4,000 years ago, printed in Erman, "Die Literatur der Aegypten" (1923, pp. 130-148), cited in Karl Jaspers, "Die Geistige Situation der Zeit" (published in 1933), translated by Eden and Cedar Paul as "Man in the Modern Age" (published in 1933 and republished in 1951, by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p. 24).

From a lazy writer to some lazy editors, who ask some recurrent questions, always "die Wiederkehr", when they have nothing new to ask.

Daniel Bell

Global Grocers

By John Wain

ALL THE URGENT problems you list are undeniably there, and they do add up to an Age of Anxiety. On the other hand one would need to be about 90 years old to remember an age that was *not* of anxiety. In the half-century before 1914 the mood in Western Europe and America was generally buoyant; and World War I, which put an end to this buoyancy, was not foreseen. On the other hand it was not unforeseeable, and had in fact been predicted by a number of observers.

This year I am 62. If I go back half-a-century to when I was 12, vast stretches of the earth were peaceful but only because they were undeveloped and undisturbed. The developed countries were in what has become their accustomed state of edginess. Germany was obviously arming to attack France and Britain. If I go back forty years to when I was 22, the power of Nazi Germany had been destroyed at the price of strengthening Soviet Russia; and now it was Russia that was arming to attack us. (You could believe she was not, but only by disregarding all the commonsense evidence. The Russians were armed to the teeth and uttering blood-curdling threats, which is just what Hitler had done.) Come forward another ten years to when I was 32, and the Hungarian Uprising had just been crushed, in the same year as the Suez fiasco. Where were the good times? When did anyone breathe easily?

The only positive thing I have to say is going to seem like an enormous *cliché*. If the human race succeeds, after a fashion, in solving its recurrent problems, solving them at any rate well enough to survive, the reason is that there is a fairly steady supply of individuals who have good will towards the world, who put their own narrow self-interest lower down in the scale than their wish to do something positive—to contribute to knowledge, to heal the sick, to relieve suffering or to maintain political stability, to work well in one of the arts. They do these things without pausing to think how the energy they expend might have been used to expand their portfolio of shares or widen the boundaries of their property. The existence of a substantial body of such people, people of good will, is necessary not only ethically but, so to speak, anthropologically. Our species will not survive without them.

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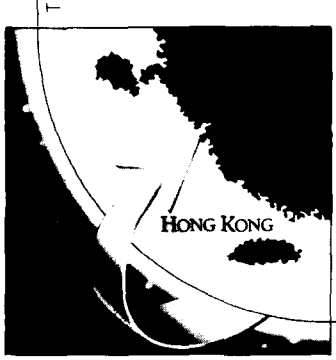

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That is why, all things considered, I am sorry that Mrs Thatcher has won a third term as Prime Minister. It will mean that the contribution made by my country, of which I am a patriotic citizen, will inevitably shrink. The sort of person Mrs Thatcher likes, approves of, and encourages is not going to do anything for humanity in general. She praises, and holds up as examples to the rest of us, energetic people whose energy flows into self-enrichment and acquisitiveness generally. Socrates, Jesus Christ, Rembrandt, Rousseau, Blake, Beethoven, Baudelaire, Whitman, Freud, were all poor men. But Mrs Thatcher is busily creating a social atmosphere in which to be poor is the mark of a failure.

When she first came to power, I felt rather refreshed; her brisk, no-nonsense approach, her assumption that prosperity was something you had to work for, made a change after the years of "lie in a feather bed till the roof falls in. . . ." I also liked her insistence on a strong Atlantic Alliance. (Naturally, an aim of Soviet policy was to split off the European nations from the United States and from one another so that they could pick us off one by one. That's what the "Peace Movement" was for, and that's what it will be for again if it ever revives.)

But now the situation is like that of the Sorcerer's Apprentice; the swilling-down has gone on and on until the place is flooded, and no one can think of the magic word to stop it. The values of the corner grocery shop have taken over, and they will never solve any of the world's problems because that's not what they were meant to do. To take one example, the Government tries to run a great University, renowned and respected all over the world, as if it were a retail outlet that has to show a profit every quarter.

From such thinking, nothing will come. Inspiration must be sought elsewhere: but where?

Fear, Real & Illusory

By Vernon Bogdanor

"Do you think that the future for the children of today will be exciting and full of opportunity, all right, dismal or frightening?"

Exciting and full of opportunity	*11%*
All right	*11%*
Dismal	*38%*
Frightening	*37%*
Don't Know	*4%*

Gallup Poll, December 1986

FEAR DRIVES PEOPLE to the Right, hope pulls them to the Left. The recent general election in Britain has done nothing to disprove this dictum. Economic troubles serve not to radicalise Western electorates, but to narrow their expectations. The 1980s, like the 1930s, is an era in which the voters are searching for "strong government", although fortunately this struggle is today contained within a democratic framework. Indeed, Mrs Thatcher, President Reagan, M. Chirac, and Herr Kohl perform a considerable service to democracy by channelling cultural alienation within institutional forms.

I remain incorrigibly sceptical of grandiose themes such as "the crisis of confidence in civilisation", and suspicious of the supposed "deeper sources and root causes" of social problems. For, as Tocqueville noticed, such analyses are all too often an excuse for historical determinism, the belief that man is necessarily passive in the face of the trends of his age. I am convinced that a country's fortunes depend as much upon the decisions made by its political leaders as upon seemingly inexorable social and economic forces. I doubt, therefore, if it is feasible to apply any overall diagnosis of the problems of Western societies. There are only specific problems faced by specific societies, and different ways of dealing with them. Yet, there may be common perspectives, common trends. . . .

THE MOST OBVIOUS feature of British society today is its geographical polarisation, with the "core" of the United Kingdom, the South and the Midlands, ruling, almost in colonial fashion, the "periphery", composed of the North, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This geographical polarisation reflects in turn a social polarisation, with the new working class of owner-occupiers employed in the private sector facing a working class imprisoned in its municipal housing estates in the cities of the north, in what Correlli Barnett has called "the coolie camps in the First Industrial Revolution". It is a division between the haves and have-nots, albeit a very different one from that foreshadowed in Marxism.

Indeed, the polarisation is made possible precisely because the notion of a united working class, something essential to socialism, has proved a fiction. The most striking feature of the second half of the 20th century (as Irving Kristol has pointed out) is the death of socialism. By contrast with the first half of the century, socialism today seems fustian and old-fashioned. The ideological conversions are now from Left to Right, not the other way round. Socialism in Britain survives only as "labourism", the attempt to protect the victims of social and economic change, rather like old Toryism in the early 19th century—and, for the same reason, doomed to defeat.

Yet, in the very completeness of that defeat, there lies cause for alarm. For, suppose the vanquished do not accept their defeat. Suppose the disadvantaged ethnic minorities, the alienated youth of the inner cities, and the unemployed—Ralf Dahrendorf's "underclass"—refuse to accept the rules of the democratic game. Suppose they join Jeffrey Richards's "hooligan culture". We have only to look at France to see the potential of a neo-Poujadist movement in the form of M. Le Pen's *Front National*, the contemporary political expression of that culture. "Young people", a *Times* survey of "Thatcher's children" (1-3 September 1986) concluded, "are deeply cynical and largely apathetic about politics, and their disaffections are not being successfully harnessed by any party. . . ." A recent publication of the Socialist Group in the

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European Parliament, *Against Racism and Fascism in Europe* (1986), found that such young people were particularly at risk from extremist groups. "Small wonder that in many cases fascist and Nazi groups are concentrating so much of their efforts upon appealing to and recruiting among the young and disadvantaged. . . ."

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself"—a typical liberal illusion, it might be thought, and one suspects that Franklin Roosevelt himself did not believe it. For the essence of the liberal creed which he championed was its activism, its belief that social and economic problems would yield to intelligent government action, its refusal to be bound by the doctrines of determinism.

What we have to fear today is the increasing polarisation of society, buttressed by competing ideologies with little to say to each other. It is for this reason that the outcome of Britain's recent election is so deeply disturbing. Where is the political movement, where the leadership, that can bind up the country's wounds and help the British people to find themselves again?

Do We Not Bleed? . . .

By Wayland Kennet

YES, THERE'S A "crisis of confidence in civilisation", even without quotation marks. There will be until either technology slows down (which seems unlikely), or social learning speeds up (which seems unlikely). Crisis has been normal this century.

The overlap between the sociophysical structures of modern weaponry and the ancient psychopolitical structure of bigotry is still the greatest of all dangers. The weaponry may be used because our extreme confidence in the rectitude of our own ideas so often clouds our awareness of the capacity of things we have made to destroy all bearers of ideas.

The official ideology of the two superpowers remains as bigoted as it was in 1920. Wartime alliance did not dent it; the war against Nazism was fought under the banner of tactical deviation. Leaders bright enough to redraw the Grand Canyon do not coincide. Roosevelt met Stalin; Gorbachov has met Reagan. . . . The abatement of two parallel bigotries must depend on certain simultaneities. We should be so lucky.

The arrangements for the choice of leaders on both sides are deplorable. The leader of a European political party who happened to be a doctor met Chernenko in Moscow and came back saying: "This man has emphysema." He must have been heading for it for years. President Reagan has told Yitshak Shamir that he was with a film crew at the Nazi extermination camps, and he has told pro-Sandinista demonstrators that he has been in Nicaragua. Likewise George the Third believed he had led his army into battle at Waterloo. The moral, if there were one, would be that the obviously cheaper and simpler notion of monarchy is as good at finding competent leaders as bureaucracy or democracy.

So what's to be done? Answering within the toy-kitchen restraints of this symposium can only be by recourse to lump-sugar sermons. The Soviet system must learn the true and not unlovely fact that Russia is in Europe; the West didn't build the Wall and the Curtain, we got rid of our empires. There were eleven European empires in 1914; only one now. All right, they needn't pull it to pieces tomorrow, but they might just begin to think ahead. Gorbachov's *glasnost* can only lead on to this.

Does he know that? I think so. He was asked before he was boss whether Muslim fundamentalism was a worry in the Soviet Union. He took our meaning. He

> "would answer in the words of Lenin, that the unity of the Soviet Union depends on the non-Russian peoples sharing fully in the economic benefits of Communism. And if we had not paid attention to those words, I do not think I should this morning be sitting in your beautiful country at the head of this distinguished delegation. . . ."

He said it confidently, and we were glad of that much frankness, but it was really only a pious hope in materialism.

The American system must begin to elect leaders who, like most others, are hardened in the disciplines of world affairs, and first of all in that needful admission of the equal reality of foreigners. Like Americans, foreigners pursue interests of their own, suffer pride and sentiment. Do they not bleed? The dismantling of European nationalisms (nationalism equals belief in the superior reality, not merit, of one's own country) in blood and fire cannot be and should not be repeated in the United States. But imagination is not in short supply among Americans. It is now their duty to the world to start electing it, and perhaps the right place to look would be among the majority who are not multi-millionaires.

A Century's Exhausted End

By Malcolm Bradbury

AS WE COME toward the turn not just of a century but an entire Christian millennium, it would seem inevitable that apocalyptic feelings increase. They are, after all, the stuff of our century, part of our irony about living in modern history, part of our accumulated despair at the failure of empires, of enlightened cultural prospects, part of the politics of an overcrowded world in which a decent and stable, a just and compassionate, social order seems as scarce as it has ever been. We live in a century that has been split in two—the first half of it now apparently proceeding, by a kind of inevitability, through imperial conflict, economic collapse, and the struggle of old classes and interests toward totalitarianism; then a second half which began, after 1945, with

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'Lady Mouse in Mobcap' from *The Tailor of Gloucester*, The Tate Gallery.

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a guarded optimism, a revived sense of liberal and humane possibility, yet which, in the wake of the Holocaust and the emergence of the atomic age, lived in a perpetual fear and anxiety, renewed by what appeared to be the survival of totalitarianism in East Europe and by a distrust of human nature and its potential for evil that was a lasting legacy of the Second World War.

Yet, after the War ended, a certain kind of cautious liberal hope, an expectation of reform and social improvement, did bring hope to life in the West. The coming of the welfare state, coinciding with a new age of consumerism and affluence, brought the promise of an improved social order, a world of welfare compassion and concern in which human opportunities increased. New technologies and a growing world economy seemed to assist the process, and new human frontiers seemed in sight.

Today those prospects look decidedly darker, not least because the liberal compact seems in many ways to have dissolved. The rise of the interglobal economy, of monetarism and the ideology of new conservatism that went with it, has diminished the sense of humanistic advance. Western societies both grow and decline, simultaneously generating technological and entrepreneurial advance and the growth of depressed new underclasses, caught in a cycle of deprivation and despair. Crime and social contrast grow, both within nations and on the world scale. A hidden rage, a new revolt of the masses, underlies the modern economy of an age that offers materiality of reward but not coherence of culture, and appeals to primitive nationalism, religious simplicity and fundamentalism, rather than some humane promise of the future.

As for the liberal ideas of the years after 1945, which engaged so many intellectuals and writers in the West in a guarded new optimism, they have fallen into striking decline. If the Existentialist movement promised a humanism won back from absurdity, the successor movements of "Structuralism" and "Deconstruction" have been largely a systematic dismantling, the philosophy of an age of decadent and self-destructing ideas. Constructing little in the way of moral content or humane intention, they predicate the waning of a way of thinking that has guided Western culture for centuries, clearing the ground of the past without constructing a future. Perhaps what they mark is the *fin-de-siècle* fading of old modes of discourse, the 19th-century ideologies alike of romantic liberalism and Marxism, which Cold War has rigidified and which have served us too long.

Today the fear must be of a rising fundamentalism—apparent not just in the Middle East, the terrifying theatre of the future, but in our own Western culture, as naive and primitive forms of faith return to justify our new stage of materialism—and the lack of a convincing contemporary humanism that speaks a convincing language of scepticism, pluralism, and compassion, and looks to a fairer world order. There are signs of profound hope, not least in the Gorbachov era in Russia, and the possibility that offers not just of military *détente* but of a break in the old rigid languages of conflicting ideology.

Centuries are apt to end in a sense of historical exhaustion, followed by an urgent appeal to the new. As veils tremble, and the sense of transition grows, fear and inertia increase, and perhaps that is what we now see. There is an inertia in contemporary ideas, a silence and lack of mission in the intelligentsia, an anxious self-parody among writers, a quietude in the energy of culture. We have lost the rage and novelty of Modernism, the moral passion of artistic liberalism; and it shows in our public life and our lack of the vision of the future.

It will, it seems, take time to recover our sense of urgent hope and long-term human prospect, but perhaps that is what the turning of centuries, the passage of millennia, is for.

Problematic Prophets

By Edward Shils

THE HUMAN RACE has never been indifferent to the remote future. In the present age, however—when the belief in individual immortality, for good or ill, and the resurrection of the dead has become very faint, above all among the more or less educated—alarm about the remote future seems to be greater than ever. There is less confidence in the survival of the species, human and animal, less confidence in the survival of the earth as a place of human and animal habitation. There is little confidence in the ability of governments to "solve problems" such as unemployment, poverty, the growth of population and inequality. It is not a univocal or continuous wail. The volume of its sound is disproportionate to the numbers who utter it. It is certainly not always genuine; it is sometimes only a stick with which to belabour modern bourgeois, capitalist society as the agent of all those menaces of destruction.

Some of those who voice such views do so because they enjoy the attention which is drawn to them by such announcements of the end of things. Yet there are, surely, some who honestly believe what they declaim; and there are many more who, even though they do not believe unreservedly, are affected intermittently by the belief that Western civilisation is winding down and endangering all mankind while doing so.

How persuasive are these calamitous expectations? I think that they reach the mass of the population in any Western society much less than they do the intellectual stratum. The latter, being relatively educated in the recent sense and therefore more exposed to fashionable notions, have had their sensibilities aroused and their apprehensiveness aggravated. It is the intellectual stratum with its tradition of hostility to modern bourgeois society which is especially hospitable to these ideas of "everything going to pot". Academic intellectuals in the "human sciences" are especially susceptible to such sentiments. Television intellectuals are always eager for bad news, and what news could be worse and more excitedly received than the prospective destruction of humanity or the exhaustion of the earth? These are, after all, part of the welcomed picture of the misdeeds of bourgeois, philistine society.

These warnings and calamitous predictions are broadcast

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through education, television and the printed press, and thereby reach the mass of the population. But they reach them in dispersed and fragmentary forms and they frequently fall on minds which have many more demanding preoccupations: the ordinary preoccupations of daily life, of households, of work, family and friendships. Their obduracy, their lack of higher schooling and of imagination are their salvation; otherwise they too would believe the nonsense which some intellectuals believe. It is true that ordinary, less educated persons are not wholly unaffected in their outlook by these anticipations of catastrophe but they are less in their possession. It is in some circles of intellectuals that these anticipations dominate to such an extent that those who deny their truthfulness are regarded as purblind reactionaries or as wilfully contrary eccentrics.

Are these apprehensions justified? There is no ground for regarding them as truthful. They might be truthful, and then again they might not. A person of good ratiocinative capacity, sound nerves, some understanding of the pitching and tossing of the waters of intellectual opinion, and moderate insistence on the adduction of evidence will have no good grounds for accepting the predictions of the sappers of collective self-confidence in our modern Western societies.

The prophetic propensities of some human beings are occasionally very powerful. But the predictive capacities of human beings are nearly always feeble, and this disqualification includes scientists. Scientists are no more truthful about the future than are prophets, although they think they are. C. P. Snow who was once a scientist and who then took it on himself to cultivate their transfiguration, especially of those with radical political views, said that scientists "have the future in their bones". That might be so, but by the time the vision of the future has passed from bone to brain to spoken and written words, its clarity and truthfulness become dissipated. Scientists know as little about the future as anyone else. Most scientists do not claim, at least in public, to be able to foresee the future of mankind, and they certainly do not claim to foresee it on the basis of reliable scientific knowledge.

There are, however, some who do (I think for example, of Paul Berg, Barry Commoner, and others); and their predictions, intended to be frightening, receive much attention in the press. They do not deserve that attention, and least of all respectful attention. They are unfaithful to the scientific ethos through their pronouncements, made with all the authority of the traditional integrity of science about subjects of which they are about as ignorant as the next man.

WHAT HAS LOOSED this torrent of apprehension on the richer and allegedly better educated societies of the world?

There have always been human beings who have desired to know the future. There are among them those who think they would like to know the proximate future, to know about what will happen to themselves, their kinsmen, their friends and fellow-countrymen within their own society and own lifetime. They know that such matters are obscure and they manage somehow to go on with their lives without complete certainty even about the relatively near future. But there are others, less numerous but more prominent and more urgently desirous of certain knowledge of the remote future, and more insistent on gaining the attention of others.

Although religious prophecy is disesteemed by most scientists nowadays, there are not a few scientists among those who make the claims of prophecy. Had they been alive at the time of the Hebrew prophets (such as Ezekiel or Zechariah), or of the author of the *Book of Daniel* or of the author of *The*

Contributors to the Symposium

George Steiner, *Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva, author of "In Bluebird's Castle", "After Babel", "Antigones". . . .* **Maurice Cranston,** *Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics. . . .* **D. J. Enright,** *co-editor of* ENCOUNTER *1970-72, and a director of Chatto & Windus 1974-82; among his books are the new and extended edition of his "Collected Poems", and "The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony". . . .* **Lord Beloff,** *Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration, University of Oxford, from 1954-74; a founder and Principal of the University College at Buckingham. . . .* **Milovan Djilas,** *the former Tito-partisan leader, and since the publication of "The New Class" a leading (often imprisoned) Yugoslav dissident. . . .* **Ralf Dahrendorf,** *Principal of the London School of Economics from 1974-84, and then Professor of Political Science at the University of Konstanz, now Warden of St Antony's College, Oxford. . . .* **Eric Rhode,** *previously a critic and historian of the cinema, now a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, author of "On Birth and Madness". . . .* **Anthony Hartley,** *author of "The State of England" and "Gaullism", served as a political analyst for many British newspapers. . . .* **Peter Jenkins,** *a political columnist for "The Independent", to which he moved from "The Sunday Times" (and, previously, "The Guardian"). . . .* **William H. McNeill,** *whose many books include "Plagues and Peoples", "The Rise of the West", and "The History of Western Civilisation". . . .* **John Weightman,** *literacy critic and translator, until his retirement Professor of French at Westfield College, London. . . .* **Daniel Bell,** *Henry Ford II Professor of Social Sciences at Harvard University, currently Pitt Professor of American Institutions, University of Cambridge. . . .* **John Wain,** *Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1973-78, poet, literary critic, novelist, and biographer of Samuel Johnson. . . .* **Vernon Bogdanor,** *Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, the author of numerous books, including "Changing British and American Party Systems" and "Multi-Party Politics and the Constitution". . . .* **Lord Kennet** *(Wayland Young), SDP spokesman on foreign affairs and defence in the House of Lords; he writes on disarmament, conservation, and European affairs. . . .* **Malcolm Bradbury,** *Professor of American Studies at the University of East Anglia; author of "The History Man" and "Rates of Exchange". . . .* **Edward Shils,** *Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, whose Press has published five volumes of his collected works.*

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Revelation of John, they would have derided them as superstitious or neurotic or ignorant. The prophetic scientists who predict the ruination of human life and the breaking of society have the same need to be certain about futurity; and they live in the same tradition as the prophets and apocalyptics who prophesied the decay of the world. They no longer believe in an omnipotent, omniscient cosmic deity or in a saviour, but they believe in the predictive power of scientists and in the redemptive power of scientific knowledge (if properly applied).

What they do not believe—and what they ought to believe—is that it does not lie within the capacity of scientific or scholarly knowledge to predict with any justifiable degree of confidence the advent of the day of doom. They think it was a mistake of their much worthier forerunners of the late 19th century to predict the continuing progress of humanity. Their own mistake is at least as great, and it does not possess the virtue of benevolence towards other human beings.

THINGS ARE INDEED not satisfactory in the world, but they have never been so. On most counts, they are more satisfactory now in many societies than they were in the past. But some intellectuals, having been persuaded that they should not believe in progress, now declare—on rather weak not believe in progress, now declare—on rather weak intellectual grounds—that it is correct to believe in regress. They think that their dignity as intellectuals rests on this espousal of the certainty of decline and decay. Their baselsss but confident belief is reinforced by their belief in the validity of "the scientific outlook"—which is not the same as scientific knowledge—and they believe, therefore, that they can speak with scientific authority about matters on which scientific knowledge does not exist—and might, perhaps, never exist on a subject like the remote future. It certainly does not exist at present.

I conclude with an account by my late friend Audrey Richards of a brief conversation which she had with our colleague, now also dead, Morris Ginsberg, at that time Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics. One afternoon, on entering the Common Room, she saw Professor Ginsberg who appeared to her to have a countenance even more dismal than usual. He was usually a rather cheerless man; he was also a man of great learning who always considered the pros and cons of every issue very meticulously. She said: "Morris, you seem very depressed today!"

He replied, in his characteristic Eastern European accent: "You know, Audrey, I can think of as many reasons for an optimistic view as for a pessimistic view."

I think he was right.

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our vision limited
by a bulkhead horizon,
we bank and sway
in unison, lean
for the sea bends
as though vying for positions
we can't alter.

We speed ahead,
handbrakes fully applied,
steering-wheels obstinate
to commands, the grey-green
camouflaged armour
like sculpted sea water,
every dial at rest,
waiting, impassive,
despite our strain.

Diesels rumble deep
below, the powers that propel us
as though individual effort
were a spurious thing. Suspension
grumbles to itself as if
a chained neighbour could collide
while, outside, unseen,
an Exocet homes in,
relentless as the sea.

Neal Mason

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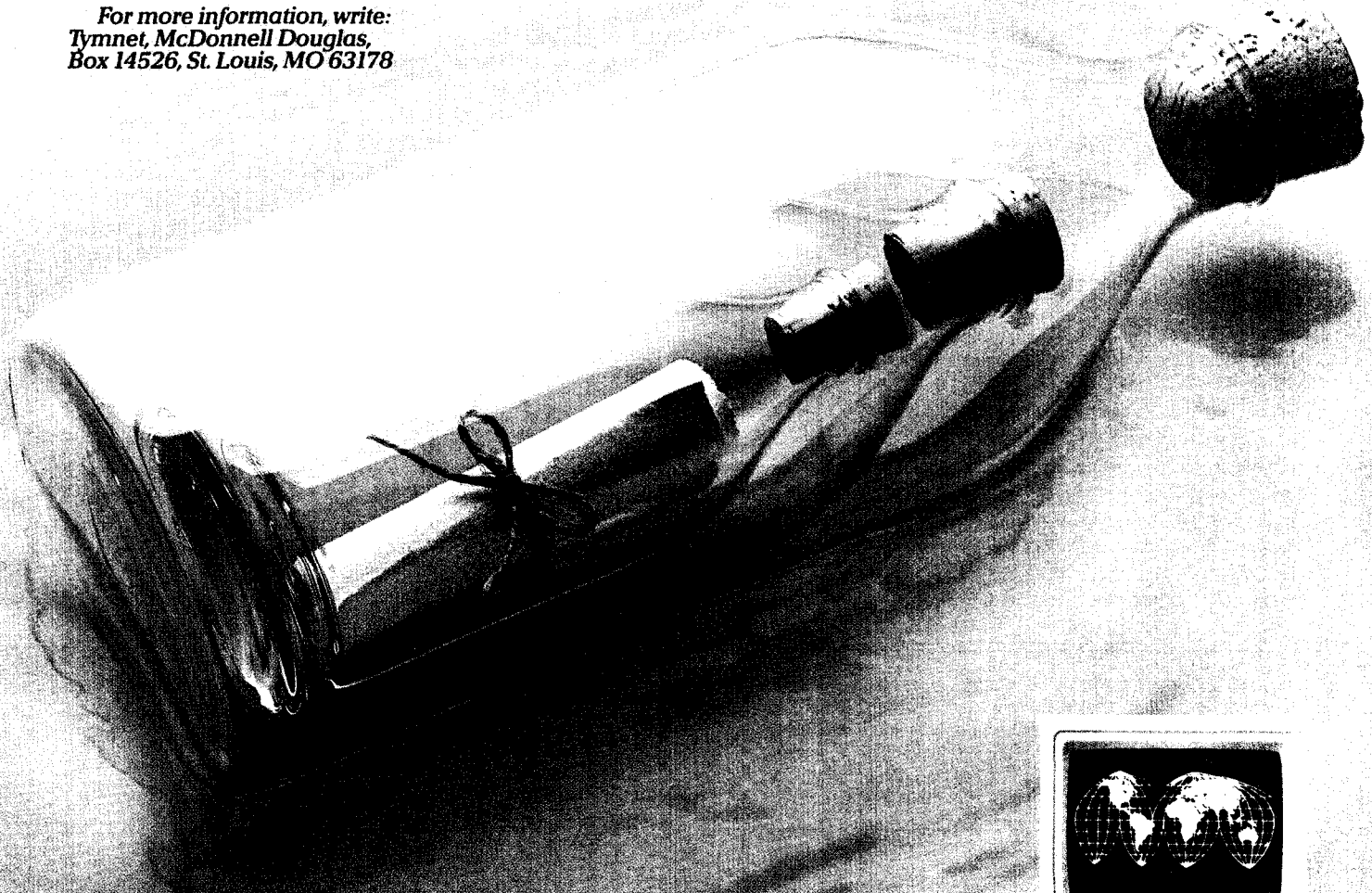

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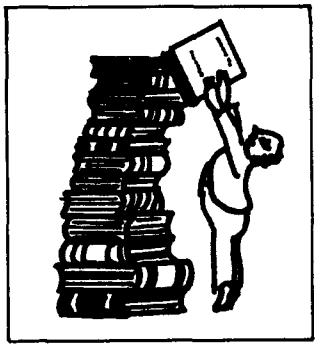
Jean-François Revel

Intellectuals in the Dock



IN HIS CULINARY CLASSIC *Five Hundred Ways to Serve Sardines*, published in Marseilles in 1898, the great Apollon Caillat was not afraid to proclaim: "Even the simplest things can be of interest." His maxim surely applies to the eternal debate about the role of intellectuals in society. The question is simple enough; anyone can discuss it, and its interest never wanes. But, unfortunately, it lacks the versatility of the humble sardine. In fact, there are only two accepted recipes.

The first blames intellectuals for using their influence irresponsibly, neglecting or falsifying the evidence, and ignoring the damage caused by their mistakes. In France, this line of attack dates back as far as Alexis de Tocqueville and the chapter in *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* which is entitled "How in the Mid-18th Century Men of Letters Became the Country's Leading Statesmen, and the Consequences that Followed". Tocqueville pointed out that "these writers' profession led them to favour general and abstract theories of government, and to put blind trust in them". As a result, "by seeking to influence public opinion, despite their almost total lack of practical experience", they became the prototypes of the Intellectual who acts like a leader of a party but takes no political risks.

The second view of the intellectuals' role is far more flattering. Far from being critical, it sees as an advantage their remoteness from practical responsibility. Thus the Intellectual becomes the moral conscience of society; the seeker after truth; the enemy of tyranny, dogma, censorship, and social iniquity. This great tradition has its glories: the Calas affair, the Dreyfus scandal, the battle against racism.

The first of the two theses is generally regarded as Right-wing, and the second as belonging to the Left. But those who thus traditionally separate the wheat from the chaff are ignoring three centuries of intellectual history, in the Old World as in the New. Just as many Right-wing as Left-wing thinkers have proposed unrealistic utopias, pseudo-scientific dogmata, and slogans that have led to catastrophe, notably between the two World Wars. Since 1945 in particular, just as many Left-wing as Right-wing thinkers have used their talents to defend mendacity, dictatorship, assassination, and even stupidity.

Bertrand Russell, the future Nobel Prize-winner, actually declared in 1937: "Great Britain should disarm; and, if Hitler's soldiers invade us, we should welcome them in friendship, as tourists. So they would become malleable, and might find our way of life attractive. . . ." Russell was an eminent philosopher in his own field—symbolic logic—but this did not prevent his being an imbecile on the subject in question. Julien Benda, author of *La Trahison des Clercs*, one of the proudest pleas for intellectuals to maintain their independence, strayed so far from his own principles twenty years later that he actually applauded the death sentence passed on Laszlo Rajk after his rigged trial in Budapest. "Voltaire", wrote Benda in *Les Lettres françaises* (17 November 1949), "was true to his role when he took up the Calas affair. So was Zola in the Dreyfus scandal. I claim to be like them when I defend the Hungarian verdict, whose justice only the prejudiced seem to deny. . . ."

THE VISION OF intellectuals as angels or priests is too naive in crediting them with infallibility, courage, probity, and discernment. The opposite view is too pessimistic in assuming that they are congenitally irresponsible and impractical, however profound or brilliant they may be as theorists or artists. Both estimates suffer from the same fault: they imply that an intellectual's strengths or weaknesses are somehow innate.

In reality, when intellectuals intervene in public affairs, they are subject like everyone else to personal motives, pressure, self-interest, passion, cowardice, snobbery, ambition, prejudice, and hypocrisy. The three virtues that are needed to resist them—good sense, courage, and honesty—are no more and no less common among intellectuals than among others. That is why, proportionally, intellectuals supply just as much cannon-fodder to the great aberrations of humanity as the rest of their contemporaries do.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS REVEL, *the French philosopher and critic, writes a regular column for the Paris journal "Le Point". His books in English translation include "Without Marx or Jesus" (n.e. Paladin, 1972), "The Totalitarian Temptation" (n.e. Penguin, 1978), and "How Democracies Perish" (Weidenfeld, London; Basic Books, New York, 1985).*

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If, for instance, one excluded from inter-War history those intellectuals who yielded to either Fascist or Stalinist temptation, there would not be many left. In the name of a "revolutionary" ideal, most of the great names in Italian literature and art contributed indirectly or directly to the establishment and consolidation of the Fascist State: D'Annunzio, Pirandello, Papini, Marinetti and the Futurists, Ungaretti (who became a Stalinist after 1945), and in a lesser degree Benedetto Croce, whose sympathies were at least ambiguous until 1925. Like Antonio Gramsci, the Communist theoretician of totalitarian intellectual power, the theorists of Fascism savagely denounced democratic and parliamentary institutions. They preached a "pedagogy of violence" like that which was revived around 1970 by the "*philosophes*" who inspired and defended the terrorism of the *Brigades Rouges*. All over Europe, hatred of liberal society became a common theme for writers, Right-wing and Left-wing alike. In Germany, the intellectuals of the Left detested the Weimar Republic just as much as did the Nazis, and their attacks contributed to its fall. In Great Britain, the most prestigious leaders of opinion, from Bernard Shaw to the Archbishop of Canterbury, condemned Fascism only to bless the Moscow Trials and the ensuing purge, and—with a remarkable logic—the Nazi-Soviet Pact.

In France, the famous 1934 Committee of anti-Fascist Intellectuals, well infiltrated by Comintern agents, included as many enemies of liberal democracy as did their formal opponents. André Thirion, in his recent book *Révisions déchirantes* (*Agonising Reappraisals*) which is the sequel to his 1972 masterpiece, *Révolutionnaires sans révolution*, describes with cruel vividness the strange convergence between Left-wing and Right-wing totalitarianism. "We are no less critical of liberal parliamentary democracy", wrote Emmanuel Mounier, leader of the Left-wing Christian movement and founder of the magazine *Esprit*, in 1935. It was, he declared, "a democracy of slaves in liberty". He added: "We in no way deny that the Fascists introduce a healthy element, compared with the régimes they replace." After the *Libération* of 1944-45, Mounier betrayed a weakness for Stalinism.

HAPPILY, THERE WERE intellectuals whose anti-Fascism, both before and after the War, was authentic—that is, did not involve exchanging one totalitarianism for another. Their names include André Gide, George Orwell, André Breton, François Mauriac, Arthur Koestler, Albert Camus, Raymond Aron, Boris Souvarine, Octavio Paz, Sidney Hook, Ignazio Silone. But they were not overwhelmingly numerous; and their colleagues did not always treat them courteously.

It would be presumptuous to list a "top twenty". Let us simply note that the label "Intellectual" is no automatic passport to lucidity. What distinguishes an intellectual is not the soundness of his opinions, but the range of conceptual, logical, and verbal resources with which he defends them. He also enjoys influence. Whether discerning or blind, impartial or dishonest, sincere or deceitful, he tows others in his wake. To be an intellectual is not to enjoy immunity, whereby all is forgiven, but to have duties rather than rights—and to take on a measure of responsibility at least as great as one's liberty

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of expression. In the last resort, the problem is moral. When Gabriel García Márquez writes that the Vietnamese boat people are simply criminals, smuggling currency out of the country, he knows full well that this is not true. His is not an error of judgment, but a very different failing. So was that of Jean Genet when on the front page of *Le Monde* he praised the assassins of the Baader-Meinhof gang. Are we to pretend that these sins are venial because they are committed by writers of international renown? One might as well argue that the further one's voice carries, the less it matters what one says.

An additional debate has developed from this old one: it concerns the link between intellectuals and the media. Certain observers are quite right to stress how absurd it is to lump all of "the media" together. Radio and television include all levels of culture, from excellent to non-existent. The real issue is not the media as such, but the way they affect the behaviour of intellectuals. The chance to reach a vast audience by theatrical artifice rather than scrupulous analysis tempts some intellectuals into political posing of the worst sort.

That intellectuals should appear in the media is all to the good. Too often, however, intellectuals do not use the media to communicate their ideas: they tailor their ideas so that the media will use them. For example: at the end of 1986 there were two French television broadcasts which dealt with the French Revolution—one *Droit de Réponse* and one edition of the weekly book programme, *Apostrophes*. Over the last 30 years, the historians of the Revolution have revised many traditional ideas—not only French historians, but also British and Americans with no stake in old French controversies and academic quarrels. This is an important historical development, and one which television could interestingly describe. Yet neither of the two broadcasts attempted it. Instead, they submerged the viewer in rhetoric and in vague allegations of a neo-liberal plot to attack *la gauche* and denigrate our Great Ancestors. An unfortunate British guest, Alan Forrest, was unable to utter three sentences. Historical knowledge could wait.

With programmes like that, how can the media pretend that they are educating or informing the public? I am not blaming the presenters. Some of them certainly cut corners; but the sad fact is that the authors themselves decide that, "to look good on the box", they must oversimplify and vulgarise. As early as 1950, referring to the radio, Julien Gracq detected "the dying moans of literature on the edge of infinity", or what he called "literature as pabulum".

In 1959, Lucien Bodard published his book on Maoism, *La Chine du cauchemar*. It was the first work to describe the horrors of the Great Leap Forward, in which sixty million people starved to death. *Scandale!* Bodard was instantly reviled. It took the death of Mao in 1976, and the revelations made by his successors, before most intellectuals felt able to tell the truth about Communist China. I remember a *Dossiers de l'écran* TV programme in the 1960s in which Lucien Bodard, a minority of one, could not get a word in edgeways. Later, Jean Pasqualini, a key witness who had described his experiences in *Prisonnier de Mao*, was subjected to a similar barrage. Simon Leys, whose book *The Chairman's New Clothes* had appeared in 1971, followed in 1974 by *Chinese Shadows*, had to wait until 1983 to tell a television audience all he knew about Maoism, in a memorable *Apostrophes* programme. For 25 years, instead of publicising truthful books about China, the French media (and the record of the American, West German, and British media—especially in the field of TV documentaries—is scarcely better) did their best to neutralise them. Nor was it the presenters who initiated this policy—or at least not always. It was the other journalists, academics, and intellectuals taking part in the programmes and ganging up against "the blasphemer".

They could benefit from a little humility. Or rather, a little genuine pride. How? Let me quote Leszek Kolakowski for the answer. In "Intellectuals Against the Intellect", he wrote:

> "Intellectuals are in no way called upon to run the world. Their most important task is to preserve and transmit the accumulated wealth of spiritual culture that is humanity's common heritage. . . ."

This seems to me a lofty enough mission. It need not exclude political commitment, but should prevent its taking the place of thought: the critical (and self-critical) exercise of analysis in the service of truthful insight.

Bird in a Tapestry

I will not be found perching
In a damaged apple tree
Laughing with the common rooks
At Adam and girl digging,

Nor on the executed skulls
Mistaken for buried eggs,
Waiting for screams to scatter
In the uneasy noon.

I move in a floral world
Set high on a man's shoulder
Above slings and curling hounds
In a time of innocence.

I glare at stags drinking by
The dwindling river, and wait.
With my claw I keep in check
Centuries of virgin day.

Patrick Hare

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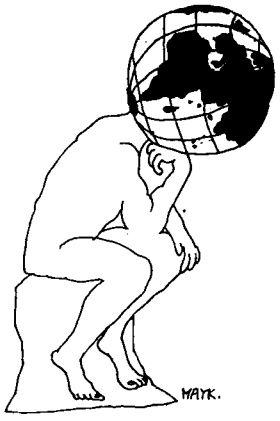
Mario Vargas Llosa

The Power of Lies



"THINGS ARE NOT as we see them but as we remember them", wrote Valle Inclán. He was undoubtedly referring to the way things are in literature, that spurious world which acquires a precarious sense of reality through the persuasive powers of the good writer and a certain readiness to accept on the part of the good reader.

For almost every writer, memory is the starting-point of the imagination; it is the springboard which precipitates it on its indeterminate journey towards fiction. In creative literature, that which emanates from the memory and that which is invented are so inextricably interwoven that it is often quite impossible even for the author to distinguish one from the other; and although he may claim otherwise, he knows that any attempt to recuperate lost time through a work of literature can never be more than mere pretence, a work of fiction in which memories merge into fantasies and vice versa.

That is why literature is the domain *par excellence* of ambiguity. It is always subjective; it deals in half truths, relative truths, literary truths which frequently constitute flagrant historical inaccuracies or even lies. Although the almost cinematographic description of the battle of Waterloo which features in *Les Misérables* may exalt us, we are aware that this was a contest fought and won by Victor Hugo, and not the one lost by Napoleon. Or—to cite a Valencian classic (since I write this in Valencia)—the conquest of England by the Moors described in *Tirant lo Blanc* is totally convincing, and no one would think of questioning its credibility with the petty argument that historically no Moorish army ever crossed the English Channel.

The reconstruction of the past through literature is almost always misleading in terms of historical objectivity. Literary truth is one thing, historical truth another. But, although it may be full of fabrication—or for that very reason—literature presents us with a side of history which cannot be found in history books. For literature does not lie gratuitously. Its deceits, devices, and hyperbole all serve to express those deep-seated and disturbing truths which only come to light in this oblique way.

When Johannot Martorell relates in *Tirant lo Blanc* that Princess Carmesina had such a white skin that one could see the wine going down her throat, he is telling us something technically impossible, and yet, when captivated by the author's magic, we accept it as an incontrovertible truth because, in the simulated world of the novel (unlike what happens in real life), excess is never the exception, always the rule. Nothing appears excessive if everything is.

In *Tirant*, for instance, there are apocalyptic battles fought with a punctilious sense of ritual, and the exploits of the hero who, single-handed, routs the mob and literally ravages half Christendom and the whole of Islam. There are comic rituals too, as demonstrated by that pious and lustful character who kisses women three times on the mouth in homage to the Holy Trinity. Everywhere we find excess—as with war, love too has generally cataclysmic consequences. Tirant, when he sees Carmesina's swelling breasts for the first time in the half-light of the funeral chamber, becomes nothing less than cataleptic, collapsing on a bed where he remains without sleeping or eating or uttering a single world for several days. When he finally recovers, it is as if he were learning to speak again. The first words he stammers out are: "*Yo amo*." "I am in love."

These fictitious events do not tell us what the Valencians were really like at the end of the 15th century, but how they would have liked to have been and what they would have liked to have done; they do not depict the characters of flesh and blood who actually lived in those terrible times, but merely the ghosts that haunted them. It is their insatiable appetites, their fears and cravings, their grudges, which are brought to life. In a successful work of fiction it is the individual's experience of an age which comes to life, and that is why novels, although, when compared with history, they may be full of fabrication, none the less communicate to us certain transitory, evanescent truths which always defy purely scien-

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tific descriptions of reality. Only literature has the powers and techniques at its disposal to distil the delicate elixir of life: the truth that lies hidden at the heart of the human imagination.

NOW, THERE IS NOTHING deceptive about the deceits of literature; at least, there shouldn't be. Only simpletons who believe that literature must be objectively faithful to life and as dependent on reality as history is, might think so. There is no deception, because when we open a work of fiction, we adjust our minds to participate in a performance when we know very well that the extent to which we are moved or bored will depend exclusively on the narrator's talent to captivate us and draw us into the world of his imagination—making us accept and experience his lies as if they were the truth—and not on his ability to reproduce faithfully what actually happened.

These well-defined boundaries between literature and history—between literary truth and historical truth—are a prerogative of open societies. There they exist side by side, independently and in their own right, although complementing each other in a Utopian attempt to encompass the whole of life. And perhaps the most effective proof of an open society, in the sense Karl Popper used the term, is when the following occurs: when literature and history coexist autonomously without either encroaching on the territory or usurping the role of the other.

In closed societies the exact opposite occurs. And perhaps the best way of defining a closed society would be to say that in such a society history and fiction have ceased to be two separate entities; they have become muddled up, each taking the other's place and swapping identities as at a masked ball.

In a closed society the authorities not only assume the right to control men's actions, what they do and what they say; they also aim to control their imagination, their dreams and aspirations—and, of course, their memory. In a closed society, sooner or later the past becomes subject to a sort of manipulation specially designed to justify the present. The official version of history, the only one tolerated, is the setting for those extraordinary *volte-faces* made famous by the Soviet Encyclopaedia. Protagonists appear and disappear without trace according to whether they have been redeemed or purged by the authorities; and the exploits of past heroes and villains alter with every new edition, in sign, valency, and substance, in accordance with the requirements of the dictatorial élite of the moment. This is a practice which modern totalitarianism has perfected but not invented; it dates back as far as the dawn of civilisation, which, let us not forget, until relatively recently was always despotic and dictatorial.

To organise the collective memory, to turn history into an instrument of the government whose role it is to legitimise whoever is in power and find alibis for their crimes, is a temptation inherent in all authority. Totalitarian States can make it a reality. In the past countless civilisations put it into practice.

Take my ancient compatriots, the Incas, for example. They effected it in a brutal and theatrical manner. When the *Emperador* died, not only did his wives and concubines die with him, but also the court intellectuals who were known as *Amautas* or wise men. Their talents were applied essentially to performing the following little conjuring trick: creating history out of fiction. The new Inca would come to power with a brand new court of *Amautas* responsible for renewing the official records, revising the past, by bringing it up-to-date so to speak, so that all the accomplishments, conquests, feats of engineering or architecture, etc., which had been attributed to his predecessor would henceforth be transferred to the new *Emperador*'s personal record of achievements. Gradually his predecessors would be forgotten—lost in oblivion.

The Incas knew how to put the past to good use, turning it into literature, so that it could contribute towards the stabilisation of the present, the ultimate ideal of any dictatorship. They prohibited personal accounts of what happened because these must always be at odds with an official account which is of necessity coherent and unappealable. The result is that the Inca Empire is a society without a history, at least without any anecdotal history; for no one has been able to reconstruct with any degree of reliability a past which has been so systematically dressed up and undressed like a professional strip-tease artist.

IN A CLOSED SOCIETY history becomes steeped in fiction, and so it actually becomes a work of fiction, because it is constantly being written and rewritten to serve religious orthodoxy or contemporary political theory; or, even more crudely, in accordance with the whims of the ruling power.

At the same time, a strict system of censorship is usually introduced so that imaginative literature is kept within narrow limits, so that its subjective truths do not contradict or cast aspersions on the official version of history, but rather popularise and illustrate it. The difference between historical truth and literary truth disappears and the two become fused into a sort of hybrid which imbues history with a sense of unreality and empties fiction of any mystery, originality, or spirit of non-conformity it may have towards the Establishment.

To condemn history to tell lies and literature to propagate facts specially concocted by the authorities is no obstacle to the scientific or technological development of a country or the establishment of a certain social justice. It seems to have been proved that the Inca period—an extraordinary achievement for its time and for ours—put an end to hunger: everyone in the kingdom had enough to eat. And modern totalitarian societies have given a great impetus to education, medicine, sport, and employment, making them accessible to the majority of the people, something which open societies, despite their widespread prosperity, have not yet succeeded in doing, for the price of the freedom they enjoy is paid for sometimes by enormous inequalities of wealth and—even worse—by inequalities of opportunity amongst their members.

But when a State, in its zeal to control and decide everything, deprives human beings of the right to create freely and believe whatever lies they choose to believe, when it ap-

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propriates that right and exercises it like a monopoly through its historians or censors—as the Incas did through their *Amautas*—one of the great nerve centres of life is destroyed. And men and women suffer a sort of mutilation which impoverishes their existence even when their basic needs are taken care of.

Because the real world, the material world, has never been adequate, and never will be, to fulfil human desires. And without that essential dissatisfaction with life which is both exacerbated and at the same time assuaged by the lies of literature, there can never be any genuine progress.

THE GIFT OF the imagination with which we are all endowed is a diabolical one. It constantly opens up the abyss between what we are and what we would like to be, between what we have and what we covet.

But it has also produced an ingenious and gentle palliative to relieve the pain of the inevitable breach between our boundless desires and our practical limitations: fiction. Thanks to fiction we can grow and diversify without losing our basic identities. We can immerse ourselves in it, proliferate, living out many more lives than the ones we have, and many more than we would be able to were we to remain confined to reality without ever venturing out of the prison of history.

Men cannot live by truth alone; they also need lies—those they invent of their own accord, not those foisted on them by others; those that emerge undisguised, not those that insinuate themselves through the trappings of history. Fiction enriches life, complements it, and offers fleeting compensation for man's tragic condition: that of always wanting and dreaming of more than he can realistically attain.

When literature is allowed to supply this alternative life, unimpeded, without any constraints except the limitations of the creator, then it extends the range of human experience by adding that dimension to it which nourishes our inner life—that intangible, elusive yet invaluable one we experience only vicariously.

It is a right we must defend without shame. Because to play a game of lies, as the author of a work of fiction does with his reader—lies writers invent according to their own personal demons—is a way of asserting individual sovereignty and defending it when it is threatened. It is a way of preserving one's own sphere of freedom, a bastion beyond the control of the authorities, protected from the interference of others, inside which we are truly the masters of our own destinies.

And from that freedom other freedoms are born. Those private havens, the subjective truths of literature, give historical truth, their counterpart, a viable existence and a function of its own: that of recovering an important part—but only a part—of our past . . . those moments of glory and wretchedness we share with others in our capacity as ordinary human beings. And there is no substitute for historical truth—it is indispensable if we are to know what we were and what we may become in terms of human society. But what we are as individuals, what we wanted to be and could not really be and therefore had to be in our dreams and imaginations—that secret side of our history—only literature can relate. That is why Balzac remarked that fiction was "the private history of nations".

By its very existence, it is a terrible indictment of life under any régime or ideology: a flagrant testimony of the inadequacies, the inability of such systems to fulfil us . . . and therefore a permanent antidote to all authority that attempts to keep men content and compliant. The lies of literature, if they are allowed to flourish freely, are proof to us that this never was the case. And they are a permanent source of intrigue which ensures that it never will in the future.

Names

There doesn't seem to be a name for that sort
of Biedermeyer, wedding-cake architecture seen
in New York's turn-of-the-century pink hotel
which pops up now and then among the canyons

like a sweet tooth, apotheosis of a certain
prosperity of bust, the ravenously slim waist.
Stepped like ziggurats, they handle accretion
with aplomb. Yellow taxis buzz in and out

and the twentieth century revolves a little
making a modest side-stroke for the desk.
I thought of all this at the Russian party
down in the Village, where men and women

bulging with sorrow like brandy glasses
wept dry-eyed in enormous vowels
for the murderous accommodations sweeping
them in and out of art-historical time.

William Scammell

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Jack Curtis

Mistress Bearberry & Lovers

WE DIDN'T KNOW he come from the University for quite a spell. He wasn't all that talkative for one thing, and we're not too fond of dudes on our stream for another thing. Littering up the landscape too, he did. Without permission either, and not even asking.

We being me and Boot McAlister, Chuck Bowie, and Whitey Larson. We cut some wood in the hills out west of Bozeman, run a few cows, and fish.

Boot, he went to war and eats rice and raw fish. Chuck played football at the University until he got kicked in the head pretty bad. Whitey never done much except punch cows and tie flies, but I won a trip to Washington, D.C., once for writing an essay on why I'm glad to be an American.

It was the way he did it, sneaking in at daybreak and fair running up the Bearberry, which is about the prettiest little creek God ever made. We'd see his tracks, but working people can't just fish day and night. Man's got cows, he has to look after them.

Boot's wife seen where he parked his little car on the county road by Bearberry Bridge early one morning when she was going to Easter sunrise service in Bozeman. Said it was blue and one of them dinky English sport cars. There was still snow on the ground.

There's one helluva big rainbow trout in the Bearberry, what I mean, he is a ring-tailed orang-utan. Different times all of us have seen him. I even had him hooked once, but ever since then he's been fly-shy. He gets bigger every year, and we have put in so much time we sort of taken squatter's rights on him.

He's our fish. I don't know what we'd ever do if we caught him and ended the game. Play taps, have a wake, I guess. And that's the reason we don't guide outsiders to the Bearberry.

Old Dynamite is our fish, we all seen him first and cussed him to the Yellowstone and back, so nobody else better try to move in.

That's why Chuck wrote out a message on the back of a feedbill and hung it on a tree, said: KEEP OUT PRIVATE PROP.

A couple days went by, and Whitey and Chuck went up that way and brought back a different message written on tablet paper hanging from the same alder branch:

Here on this happy water I have a passion,
A pretty blue-eyed mistress, strong and sinuous
Like Nubian dancers who move their perfumed hips
To tune tiny silver bells and encourage a man to think
Of slow-turning love, yet still fresh
And rosy as Norwegian darlings dressed
In blue foxfurs and peaked caps of tapestried silk,
I love her most because she changes faces,
Alters her dress, modulates her melodies,
Shifts her moods, and transforms the complexion
Of a leaden day to sunbeams sparkling in a fry pool
Like tricks of mischief to my harried self.
She is not mine nor belongs to any of us
Until a fool comes with a dam in mind, then we shall lose
This chaste and capricious princess. We shall sell her for
A factory and eat our guts out for it. We shall trade
Her to the banker for an air-conditioner and suffer
Melancholy in a cold house.
But, for now, for this my wintry season, I shall keep faith,
Not because it is plain easy, but because such beauties are few
And far between, the splash of an old trout in bonny
Quick water outnumbered by carp in a pond. And I shall
Follow her feckless aery passage as many days
As are given me to steal, play my time in her dingly
Dell, marry this rare chancy water to me
And fish her like a man.

"You're the literary type, Frank", Boot said to me. "What does it mean?"

Took me awhile. I went through it maybe three times whilst Chuck was saying they meant to dam up the Bearberry, and Whitey said it was some kind of porno smut, and Boot was saying it meant war and he was ready.

"Calm down, boys", I advised, "this is a kind of poem."

"I'm ready", Boot said. "I fought 'em once and I'll do her again."

"Boot, shut up", I said. "There ain't no war, so put your mare's leg back on the wall. This is by a lunatic or

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maybe just a harmless retard, we don't know, but for sure he's short a few pieces of furniture in the parlor."

"Then what does this looney think he's doing?" Chuck asks.

"He's saying the Bearberry is like a pretty girl that he's fallen in love with, unless I'm mistaken", I said.

"What do you expect he means to do with her?" Chuck asked.

"Says he's going to fish her, what he says."

"I ain't invitin' him to the club", Whitey said.

"Where's he from? That's the question", Boot said.

"I'd say he's out of Bozeman, he's so educated", Chuck said.

"You suppose we oughter report him to the Sheriff?" Boot asked.

"Well, he ain't really done nothing yet", I said.

"He's trespassin'", Boot said.

"That's all BLM land, you want to report him to the Feds?" Chuck asked, and we all knew without anybody saying, how much Chuck hates those sonsabitches.

"Well, he might be a danger to young girls in Bozeman", Boot said.

"You ever know a Montana girl needed help looking out for herself?" Whitey laughed himself silly. "Why, that whacko starts after a Montana cowgirl, she'll sink her spurs in his ribs and whip him to death with a willow switch."

"Man, I knew a girl once over by Wolfden . . .", Boot started, but we all shut him up because he tries to tell that same story every time.

"You don't suppose he's using lures?" Chuck suggested suddenly.

"Old Dynamite", Boot howled. "He's going to shoot a worm at Old Dynamite for sure."

"Don't jump before you squat", I said.

"Maybe we ought to have a talk with him", Chuck suggested.

"Tell him we don't allow nothing but flies on the Bearberry", I said.

"Let's do it", Boot said, and we all agreed to have a chat with the oddball.

TROUBLE WAS, he always went early. The Bearberry was closer to Bozeman than it was to any of our spreads, and we didn't often try to get out there at daybreak because it meant getting out of bed about midnight.

And besides, with spring comes calves and we get busy, so it happened all we'd ever see was his tracks and I noticed once that he was picking up our old beer cans that had kind of accumulated over a period of time, and we wondered about that.

But the fishing was good and once in a while somebody'd see Old Dynamite hanging around a waterfall, but he wasn't taking no handmade Black Gnats or Golden Stoneflys.

"That's too pretty a creek to let some dude shoot worms at the fish." Boot recollected our concern over Old Dynamite.

"You saying we oughtn't take any chance, well, sure, but do you want to call a game warden down on us?"

"We can put up a sign", Whitey said. "I'll do it myself."

So there it was, Whitey's sign hanging on the same alder branch: NO WORMS ALLOWED.

"That'll keep him honest", Chuck said.

Of course the smartass had to have the last word and Boot found the pieces of tablet paper pinned to the alder with the barbless hook of a ragged Elk Hair Caddis.

I've seen a fish in the Bearberry
I vow I'd risk a hell worse than Beelzebub's
And try a trick or two to match and mate
The lunker; I'd risk my soul to have him
On my hook for a moment much as a man in his youth
Will chance his life for one toss
In the pillows with a comely maid,
But any trick I'd try would be fly,
For if it comes to mating
I would not wed him with a worm,
I'd rather wed the worm myself and all his cousins
In a grave unknown, than treat that fish cheaply.
I've spoken with him who's more the size
Of salmon taken from the streams of Wales
Than any rainbow, and he is a dark and moody man,
That fish, grouchy, I'd say.
See him touch the sand with his tail
And go crashing skyward like a marlin chasing
Sailfish, blowing up the cratered sand and exploding
Like a box of dynamite
In the froth he lifts along,
Daring to enter this airy heaven for an instant,
The same as we sometimes become greater
Than ourselves in rare moments of provocation,
Say in battle when a friend cries for help,
Or when the idea comes and must be written
Or in as simple a thing as carrying a child straddling one's neck
And kept aseat by holding to his feet,
Those fine moments indeed he partakes in
As well when he blows up out
Of the sandy riffle and tries to top the trees
Before God Almighty cuts him off
And lets him fight falling short
To his ancient home and atmosphere.
God bless him and keep him.

I studied the page a spell and glanced around at them, all looking like three worried hens with one chick. "He don't use worms."

"Sounds like he's strictly a fly type", Whitey nodded.

"Well, that's a step in the right direction", Chuck said with relief. "I figured maybe he'd have one of

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them electronic lures with flashing lights dipped in one of them stinkums they say is sure-fire."

"No, near as I can figure, he'd rather be eat by a worm than use one."

"He seen Old Dynamite?"

"Sure as hell. Says he comes out of the riffle like a box of dynamite."

"I have a hunch he's Irish or Scotch or Welsh, or one of them", I said.

"Hell, all them tribes is crazy", Boot said.

"Tea's their drink. It fries their brains and makes 'em windy."

"Well, he's that for sure", I said, putting the yellow paper on the mantel along with the other. "But I don't see much what we can do about it, unless you're set to just kick his ass out."

"I'm ready", Boot said.

"Don't seem as he done much harm yet", Chuck said.

"Supposin' he builds himself a fire up that way to make his tea? Suppose he sets the brush afire and burns up Bearberry Mountain?" Whitey worried.

"Now, wait a second, hold your horses . . .", I finally got a word in, ". . . he hasn't set any fires yet."

"That ain't sayin' he won't", Boot replies. "Better to fight fire with fire."

"An ounce of prevention", Chuck said.

"Whatever you say", Boot said, "I'm ready."

"What you thinking on now?" I asked, kind of disgusted. They come up with some of the goddamnedest ideas and if they wasn't my friends I'd send them down the road faster'n a turpentined cat.

"You ready to have a talk with him?" Whitey asked.

"I'm cuttin' and brandin' all week", Boot said.

"I'm skiddin' logs", Whitey said.

"I'm goin' fishin' tomorrow afternoon, and I don't care whether the calves run loose or not", Chuck said. "A man shouldn't ever be bothered when he's got fishing on his mind."

"Then you can put up a sign just in case he's got a box of kitchen matches and a can of gas", I said, but nobody laughed.

"What do you think I ought to put on the sign?" Chuck asked.

"No Fires", Boot and Whitey said together.

Saturday Chuck brings me this yellow tablet paper all wrote out in easy reading script. Boot and Whitey dropped by and we sat on the back screen porch close to the refrigerator where the beer was cold and a breeze drifted through.

"Translate it, Frank", Boot said.

Fires enough blaze in our pretty pools and riffles,
Living fire it is, fleet and tongued
With flame, these Brookies give their best and more
Than any ordinary smouldering Dollie Varden—
Or to raise a Rainbow above the arc of a burning
Bush is fire enough for my heart to kindle
Admiration such as your Grant felt for noble Lee
In his hour of surrender at Appomattox,
Or to fish for a smarter metaphor,
I recall a country girl I married after
Giving and taking yards of line, tossing at her
sparking
Words like brilliant Hackles, until she touched one
With her lips and came to me, ah, there was an
Admiration, there was a fire of adoration
And that is how we mate
In our Bearberry joustings, hurling shooting heads
Like floating winged kisses to be consumed
By natural flames
Hidden in the rippling courses.
By God, to tease and take these furious fish fuses
lightning
In my honest spine
On this threaded stream
Banked with berries and cluttered with awesome
Fellows blundering about with boots like buckets,
Heads achuckle with thoughts diverse from fishing
The fever from these blushing waters.

"I reckon he won't be building any fires up that way", I said, to satisfy their worries, "and the rest of it says fish are like fires in the water and they heat up a man's innards when he gets a solid strike and brings in a scrapper."

"It's that way, all right", Boot nodded.

"Otherwise we wouldn't be spending our lives prowling up and down the Bearberry", Whitey laughed.

"What was that about fellows blundering around?"

"He's talking about your big feet, Boot", said Chuck.

"He better lay off the insults or I'll do a dance on *him*."

"He's saying we ain't really serious fishermen is what he's saying", Whitey said. "We ought to just tell him how long we been keeping that stream to ourselves."

"And tell him hit the road, you goddamned limey", Chuck said.

"I'm for kicking ass, boys", Boot said.

"Steady", I said, "steady on, boys. Suppose he has friends in town and they all come out and tramp all over the Bearberry?"

"We best find out who he knows before we kick ass", Whitey agreed.

"I don't like his holier than thou stuff, the way he hauls out beer cans and tidies up every place", Boot said.

"It does look some better", I said.

"Sounds like you're taking his side", Boot said.

"I'm just saying we been lazy about taking care of our Bearberry, and he spotted it. And he didn't put up no sign saying No Beer Cans."

"It's ours and I happen to lose a beer can once in a while it's no harm done", Chuck said.

"Does it look better now than say three months back, you chuckleheads?"

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"Sure does", Whitey laughed. "Don't get all steamed up, Frank."

"Well, I was wondering if I'd gone stone blind or something." I smiled to take the curse off the moment.

"We don't want to get to quarrelin' over nothin'", Chuck said.

"I can see that sucker right now, some dandy wearin' jodhpurs and sporting a fancy Eddie Bauer outfit, probably got a servant carrying a picnic basket full of fried chicken and cold champagne."

"Probably one of them guys wears a feather in their hat", Whitey said.

"Probably smokes perfumed cigarettes."

"With filters, too", Boot added.

"You boys want to meet this dude?" I asked.

"I wouldn't mind", Whitey said, "but I'm skinning cat all next week."

"I'm shippin' beef", Chuck said.

"I got wire to stretch", Boot said. "But I'm ready if you say so."

"You suppose that dude goin' to catch Old Dynamite?" Chuck asked suddenly.

"You know, he might throw a stick of powder in the long pool just to get him."

"Nobody'd do that", I said.

"Hell, I did it once over on Plaskett Creek, couldn't catch 'em out of there, was so steep. Tossed in a bomb and waited downstream, pulled out a hundred pounds of trout", Boot said, and seeing our disapproval, added, "I'm not promisin' I wouldn't do it again if times ever git as hard as them times, either."

"I guess if a man has to, he has to", Whitey said, "but it ain't right."

"I said I had to or it was my momma and poppa would go hungry as well as the little ones", Boot said bitterly. "What you got in mind, Frank?"

So it was "No Bombs" I stuck on the alder tree and then I just went fishing on up the stream and enjoyed the way the light turned from pink to lavender to purple, the way you can make a bokay of flowers with roses and bluebonnets and dark irises, and watch the colors blend in until it's dark and time to take a few fish home.

We were into August by then, when the fishing is best, and we tried to take all the time off we could and use it wisely on the Bearberry, but there's always some damned crop that gets ripe about then.

But a lot of time, driving the big truck full of milo maize, I thought about lazin' around on that fine stream, flaring out meanders of line, touching a hair-wing on a new bubble in a riffle of round rocks and seeing in my mind's eye the big, gutty, Mr Old Dynamite himself come up with his mouth open and going ninety miles an hour, going to swallow the little fly clear down to his rudder and I'm going to play with him a

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half an hour and then I will pat him on the back and turn him loose, still a proud fish for having done his bottom best.

I drove over that way pretty late, and even though I took my rod and all, I didn't hardly expect to fish much. I more wanted to hear the water talk the way he said it talked, like little silver bells and all, and that way I found his "No Bombs" poem pinned up there with a worn out Midge Adams.

Unlikely that a man raised on the rills
Of those salmon-striped rivers of Wales
Would dare resort to science
In the capture of his conscience,
The same as some devious plot to cheat God of his own
Gathering when an eternal desert wasteland
Waits for malevolent psychotics who would kill
A world to prove their value.
This planet has enough of hurricanes
And earth-shakes and volcanoes pounding on all
Watermade creatures than permit a bomb pleasing
To nothing and proving that mass man in his nesthills
Has lost his brain and gained his death.
Yours and mine as well, e'en though
We've kept our mistress Bearberry like a park
And touched sweet earth instead of asphalt,
Drowsed to better watch the clouds of life
Form and inch overhead, clouds that cleanse
The soul without invoking monstrous murder
Of all creatures ever made, the darting trout, the
Quick fox, the dancy deer, all beauty still preserved,
To cough itself to death under the cloud
Of man's madness.
No, I need not any command from Izaak's buckaroos
Forbidding science from our hallowed Bearberry,
Better I would
Hear a massive call
Forbidding any weapon
That has the chance of melting down
Our planet, or piling ash on ash, leaving
Not a stream nor a man to fish it.

"What do you make of that?" Boot asked. "He one of them peaceniks?"

"Sure sounds like it", Whitey said. "Kind of a sad poem, ain't like his usual blowharding."

"I wish I'd never seen it", Chuck said.

"We wrote out that sign, remember? 'No Bombs.' Got him started thinking sorrowful."

"You think he's right?" Boot asked.

"Well, 'course he's right. He's only saying he wants our whole world safe and especially the Bearberry", I said. "He just don't say how we can do it."

"You suppose he marches around in front of the Armory passing out leaflets?"

"I suppose", I said, "considering he does believe in something."

"We know he's from Wales", Whitey said. "He come right out and said that."

"What do they do?" Boot asked.

"Seems like they raise sheep", I said.

"I'm ready any time for any goddamned sheepherder", Boot snarled.

"We don't want to forget that he's a fisherman too—a fly fisherman at that." I tried to calm them down.

"I was going to put a saddle on my colt, but he don't like sheep any better'n me", Whitey said.

"I'm game." Chuck set his big jaw. "I hate them woollies more than anything."

"That makes four", I said.

"What we going to do?" Chuck asked.

"We are going fishing in the morning, catch a few brookies, and maybe run into this Welshman", I said.

"I'm ready for him", Boot said. "Sheepherder peacenik."

"Izaak's buckaroos, by God I'll teach him something they don't teach at poetry school", Chuck said.

"Sounds like an outright insult to me", Whitey said.

"Maybe he did it on purpose", I said. "Like he's thrown out a challenge to us."

"That's crazy. No tea-sippin' dude goin' to fight a cowboy", Whitey said.

"Maybe he's got somethin' to say and nobody to say it to", I said.

"And maybe he's lurin' us into a trap, figuring to hog the Bearberry for his own self and purposes", Boot said.

What with one thing or another happening, including a calf-pulling, we got to the bridge late Monday morning. But we was early enough to find the blue Spitfire parked in the shade.

"Fur goin' to fly", Boot said.

"Maybe we better let Frank do the talkin'", Whitey said.

OUR USUAL PLAN was to walk a few hundred yards up from the road to the long pool, then split up, each man fishing what he liked best.

Carrying our equipment and a few cans of beer we started out, going quiet and saying nothing. Boot led the way, and then he stopped so quick, I about tromped on him.

"Hear that talking?" he whispered.

"Somebody with him", Chuck said softly.

"Bodyguard", Boot whispered again, and turned to lead us on.

We came around a great rock that walled half of the long pool and saw this old geezer in waders with a fish on. He was just singing away at the fish, like maybe he thought he could lullaby him to sleep.

"Come along, good king . . .", he was saying, "sail a bit and clear your throat. . . ."

And just then Old Dynamite rared up out of the far end and did a heck of a bucking bronco twist, fighting the leader, and falling with a mighty splash.

"Easy does it, my father, you'll snap a tippet splur-

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ging all thy vengeance on a mere sting in the mouth. . . ."

He was playing the big fish like a conductor of an orchestra, or a lad flying a big kite with a light string, the rod under heavy pressure, giving and taking, letting Old Dynamite work his way back and forth in the arc prescribed by the conductor.

"An arpeggio!" he laughed, "another phrase, another chorus, now come along a bit . . . easy, my old friend, don't rip your jaw, nor rush to shock, it's not that bloody in my own heart, I tell you. . . ."

He didn't see us crouched there on the granite behind him like we was in front row seats.

He was moving backward toward shore, coming closer to us, and we just hunkered there, dazzled by his patience and first-class handling of the rod, all wrist and finger, and keeping his feet well set.

He was maybe a hundred pounds wet, maybe high as a five foot fence-post. He wore an old plaid shirt and a scroungy old hat tipped with trout flies. His cheeks were red, and his back was straight, and there wasn't a tremble in his knotted hands.

He gradually eased Old Dynamite to the shallows and had him, big as a salmon, laying on his side in a pool.

"Come, old friend, enough of a run this day? Thank you, good fish, for the fair fight and fun", and with that he slips out the barbless hook.

He never even touched the fish. He made a little wave with his boot and got Old Dynamite started, and off he went, tired and slow, but plenty alive.

"Mighty fine fishin", I said quietly.

He looked around, and smiled right out, a sparky, spunky kind of a smile you don't see too many of, and I seen that his eyes was as blue as water in the long pool. I guessed him at about sixty-five or so. Wizened up like a Wolf River apple that's been through a snowfall.

"I'm glad you turned him loose", Whitey said.

"Right pretty", Boot said. "Right pretty."

"I'd say so", Chuck nodded.

"Ah, my friends, you have caught me", he said, "or have I caught you?"

We mentioned our names and shook hands around, and he said, "You know by now what I think of this stream. I come up here whenever possible and catch Old Dynamite, and it's as if he gives me strength enough to go back to my classes and survive a little longer."

"You catch him before?" Boot asked.

"Oh, he'll take my fly any time. I can't remember how often I've played him and released him. He's getting spoiled, I'm afraid, beginning to enjoy it a little much."

"Jesus Christ", Chuck said, "I've heard some might' big lies in my day, but I reckon you're boss."

The old dude laughed and coughed some, and said, "I'm going to miss these mornings."

"You going to quit now that you got Old Dynamite tamed to call?" Whitey smiled.

"I'm sorry, the year is done and I must return to England."

"I'm sure glad we had a chance to meet up", I said.

"I was beginning to think I was using the wrong bait", he chuckled.

"Bait?" Boot squinted.

"Lure is more apt." He smiled that rubbery, saucy grin. "I'd not have gone farther than Izaak's buck-aroos. Rather thought you'd take the blundering bucket boots."

"Summer work, or we would have for sure", I said.

We drank some beer and nobody even mentioned beer cans. We just packed 'em into our empty creels and hiked back down to the road.

"I wish we'd met sooner", he said.

"We want you back", Boot said.

"Damned right", Whitey said.

"I'm afraid it's not possible", he murmured doubtfully, like he thought we was teasing.

"I'll quit fishin' just to watch you perform", Chuck said.

"Old Dynamite goin' to get fat and lazy without your lungin' him every day", I said.

"It's been a bit lonely." He looked around at the four of us and smiled. "You're the first Yanks I've met who spoke my language."

CAME ON WINTER, and nothing much but snow and muck. Beef went down and gas went up. We was eating plenty deer and elk from the freezer but didn't seem as much fun like it was in the summer, and then I got this letter from overseas.

Dear Friends,
A stream I knew in the west where when
Spring comes there will not be a trace of man or his
Works, not a trace of corrosion,
Not a cleated footprint in the wet earth,
Not a scent of smoke, nor squawk of
Tyres, nothing, only the cold water arush ringing
Little rhymes from the rocks all softened by ferns and
Bent alders, spined with spruce and made calm
With the boles of white birch just peeping into
leafbud—
Somewhere on the south slope a black bear bumbles
into
The hillside sun with two bouncing babies.
This is what I see: the mother knows the morrow
most,
And I will trust her sense more than nuclear
Foolishness, and for that I promise, I vow, by God,
I will fish the long pool
And greet old fish and old friends
Come spring.

Livened up the rest of the dreary winter just retelling tales back and forth, and reading those lines he wrote on yellow tablet paper.

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Thomas Sowell

Visions of War & Peace

THERE HAVE LONG been two very different visions of war, corresponding to different visions of the nature of man. Those with a highly constrained vision of man's intellectual and moral capacity have asked different questions, as well as given different answers, from those whose vision of the world is not based on such a restrictive reading of human nature. When those with conflicting visions of man attempt to prescribe methods of reducing the dangers of war, they often prescribe diametrically opposite policies. This has been true for centuries, so it is not surprising that opposing visions of how to prevent war were in conflict within the Western democracies in the years leading up to World War II. What is surprising is that, even after the ascendancy of one of these visions led to the greatest carnage in history, both visions remain as politically viable as ever.

The dire possibilities of a nuclear age make it especially important to be clear as to what the conflicting visions assume and how those assumptions have fared in practice. For this, it is necessary to look first at the general arguments as to ways of preventing war, and then at the application of these beliefs in policies on the eve of World War II.

1. Man & War

THE CONSTRAINED VISION of human nature sees such evils as crime, oppression, and war as more or less natural consequences of human frailties in general and egocentricity in particular. The aggrandisement of some at the expense of others requires no special explanation, in this vision. What requires explanation is how free, law-abiding, prosperous, and peaceful eras occur. When Hobbes depicted the natural state of man as being a war of each against all, he epitomised a tradition whose legal, economic, moral, and political views reflect a coherent vision of man that has remained viable for centuries since then. Some of those who have shared this vision include Edmund Burke, Adam Smith, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Milton Friedman, among many others. Equally viable over the same span has been the conflicting vision—in which it is institutions, rather than human nature, which explain or cause war, poverty, crime, and oppression. Such views among a large number of 18th-century Enlightenment figures were systematised in a passionate treatise published by William Godwin in 1793, entitled *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Later luminaries in this tradition have included George Bernard Shaw, Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, Gunnar Myrdal, and John Kenneth Galbraith.

Among the general features of these two visions, which I have elaborated on elsewhere,[1] only a few need be sketched here. The constrained vision relies heavily on incentives (including threats) more than on dispositions or explicit persuasion to accomplish its purposes, whether in the economy, the law, or international relations. Articulated rationality plays a much less important role in this vision than in the unconstrained vision, and the intellectual classes are correspondingly regarded as less reliable guides than traditions and institutions evolved from the experience of the many, rather than the special talents of the few. Emotional bonding agents, from family ties to patriotism, are considered to be crucially important by those with the constrained vision, and therefore are to be supported both intellectually and institutionally.

By contrast, those with the unconstrained vision tend to regard incentives—both rewards and punishments—sceptically, whether in child-rearing, criminal justice, or inter-

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His publications include "Classical Economics Reconsidered" (Princeton University Press, 1974); "Knowledge and Decisions" and "Ethnic America" (Basic Books, 1980-81); "Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?", 'Marxism: Philosophy and Economics", "A Conflict of Visions", and "Compassion versus Guilt" (William Morrow, 1984-87). He is currently a Senior Fellow of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

[1] Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions* (William Morrow, 1987).

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national relations. Articulated rational persuasion holds a higher place in their scheme of values, both for reasons of morality and reasons of effectiveness. Those skilled in articulated rationality—intellectuals—hold a correspondingly higher place in the unconstrained vision. Dispositions (being committed to peace or social justice, for example) count for more in this vision than in the constrained vision. Emotions and emotional ties are viewed at best ambivalently in the unconstrained vision, where they are seen as threats to rationality, justice and peace, despite whatever benefits they may also produce. Families, with the disparate advantages and disadvantages they pass on to different members of succeeding generations, are an obvious threat to the vision of social justice, and patriotic emotions are seen as a spur to war—or, at the least, as an obstacle to the rationalistic compromises regarded as the way to ease international tensions and prevent war.

The constrained and the unconstrained vision do not, of course, exhaust the political spectrum. Neither Marxism nor fascism fits within either tradition, though having some elements of each. Yet what is remarkable is the wide range of leading moral, political, economic, and legal theories of the past three centuries which do fall within one or the other of these two visions. More important, this is particularly so in Western democratic nations, where the question of how to avoid war has long been a major preoccupation.

No one had a more consistently constrained vision of man than the authors of *The Federalist Papers*. They openly acknowledged that the central principle of checks and balances which they built into the Constitution was "a reflection on human nature", but asked: "What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature?" Governments were instituted because "the passions of men will not conform to the dictates of reason and justice without constraint".

This same vision was applied internationally. Only the deterrent threat of force maintained peace, according to *The Federalist Papers*, for "nations in general will make war whenever they have a prospect of getting anything by it". There were no *special* causes of war. War was what to expect among independent states in the vicinity of one another—and was one of the arguments for uniting the thirteen newly independent American states under a strong national government:[2]

> "It is sometimes asked, with an air of seeming triumph, what inducements could the States have, if disunited, to make war upon each other? It would be a full answer to this question to say—precisely the same inducements which have, at different times, deluged in blood all the nations in the world."

These were not simply the views of those with a particular *political* theory. It was a view based on a general vision of man, and was common to others who shared that vision, whether their field was economics, law, politics, or other specialities. Adam Smith, for example, shared fully the Federalists' constrained vision of man—indeed, he anticipated them by more than a quarter of a century in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759)—and he likewise saw military strength as an essential deterrent, without which "the civilisation of any country" cannot be "preserved for any considerable time". Although he opposed wars of conquest and glory, Smith supported patriotism and declared that "the security of every society must always depend, more or less, on the martial spirit of the great body of the people".[3] In Oliver Wendell Holmes there was the same strain of patriotism, rejecting those "who think that love of country is an old wives' tale", and disdaining "the enlightened children of commerce who tell us that war is to be no more". Holmes, too, did not glorify war but saw it as an ugly necessity, justifying not only individual sacrifice but also the sacrifice of individuals:[4]

> "We march up a conscript with bayonets behind to die for a cause he doesn't believe in. And I feel no scruples about it."

Holmes's record on the Supreme Court made it clear that he did not value individual rights lightly, yet here as elsewhere he was prepared ultimately to sacrifice the individual to the needs of the society which made the individual's own civilised existence possible.[5]

Edmund Burke as well saw war not as a means of glory or aggrandisement—like Adam Smith, he opposed fighting to retain the American colonies—but believed it to be a necessity for survival and freedom. Those with an unconstrained vision often pose the issue as whether military expenditures or war are justified by anything to be acquired, over and above what one already has. But, to those with the constrained vision, such sacrifices are inherently part of the cost of merely keeping what is already possessed—including freedom. This latter was clearly Burke's view. During the war against France, he said:

> "They ask what they are to *get* by this war? Why! The wretches, they get their existence—they get the power of playing the fool with impunity by it—and is that nothing?"

Burke did not believe that rationalistic compromises on substantive issues were necessarily effective ways of avoiding war. "If men are resolved to quarrel, they will, as Shakespeare says, 'find quarrel in a Straw'", he declared.[6]

The opposing view—the unconstrained vision of man—sees

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[2] Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (The New American Library, 1961), pp. 322, 110, 46, 60.

[3] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Liberty Classics, 1976), pp. 233-234, 375; *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776; Modern Library, 1937), pp. 667.

[4] *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*, ed. Max Lerner (1933), pp. 10, 19, 383, 431. See also pp. 58, 392.

[5] See *Buck v. Bell*, 274 U.S. 200, at 207; Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., *The Common Law* (Little, Brown and Co., 1923), pp. 48, 108.

[6] Edmund Burke, *Speeches and Letters on American Affairs* (J. M. Dent & Sons, 1961), pp. 89-90. See, for example, Robert Rhodes James, ed., *Churchill Speaks* (Chelsea House, 1980), p. 465. *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* (University of Chicago Press, 1968), vol. VII, p. 416; vol. VIII, p. 158.

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war as due to social institutions rather than human nature. "War and conquest cannot be beneficial to the community", according to William Godwin, and therefore "they will never be undertaken, but where the many are the instruments of the few."

Explaining war in institutional terms has remained a hallmark of this vision. "War", according to John Dewey, is "a function of social institutions, not of what is natively fixed in human constitution". More specifically, George Bernard Shaw declared, "the fault lay not so much in our characters as in the capitalist system". In World War I, the substantive issues among the great powers "could have been settled with the greatest ease, without the shedding of one drop of blood, if they had been on decent human terms with one another instead of on competitive capitalistic terms". To Thorstein Veblen as well, "the preservation of the present pecuniary law and order, with all its incidents of ownership and investment, is incompatible with an unwarlike state of peace and security". While not all those with an unconstrained vision or an anti-military philosophy are also opposed to capitalism, this whole tradition has for centuries found the explanation for war—as for other social ills—in institutions.[7]

GIVEN THE VERY DIFFERENT sources of war in the two visions, it is hardly surprising that their means of preventing or reducing the incidence of war are likewise diametrically opposed. To Godwin, a nation whose "inoffensiveness and neutrality" would present no military threat to others would be less likely to cause a "misunderstanding" which could "provoke an attack". In this view, military build-ups, military alliances, or balance-of-power politics were likely to lead to war. By contrast, the Federalists said: "A nation, despicable by its weakness, forfeits even the privilege of being neutral."[8]

The view of war in Godwin's treatise has several elements which characterise a whole tradition, and which were especially salient in the beliefs and policies followed in the years that led up to World War II. One is that "misunderstandings" are an important source of war. Another is that a nation whose "own conduct is sober, equitable and moderate" is "exceedingly" unlikely to be attacked. Godwin therefore deplored the stirring up of patriotism, which he characterised as "high-sounding nonsense" and "the unmeaning rant of romance". He likewise rejected the notion of fighting for "national honour", on the argument that small concessions lead to successive demands for larger concessions.[9] In issues of war and peace, as in domestic social issues, Godwin's vision was a kind of one-day-at-a-time rationalism, which avoided anticipatory decisions or commitments, in favour of deciding issues *seriatim* as they arose.[10] Defending "national honour" over issues that would otherwise not be worth the trouble was seen by Godwin as pointless emotionalism, rather than as an investment in deterrent credibility. This line of reasoning was still strong in those who asked during the 1930s: "Why die for Danzig?"

2. The Road to World War II

THE TRANSITION from theories and ideologies to the raw reality of politics and complex history requires at least an awareness that flesh-and-blood realities necessarily differ from skeletal analytical models. Politicians, especially those in office, speak not simply from premises to conclusions but also from political considerations to an audience's hopes and fears. Yet, in broad outline, much of what is said, even in this context, has important implications for the prevailing vision of the world to which political leaders must appeal, regardless of the degree to which they themselves share that vision. Neville Chamberlain was not William Godwin, and it is questionable whether a man so preoccupied with the practical as Chamberlain ever explored his premises or elaborated his conclusions as Godwin did. Nevertheless, the principal themes of Chamberlain's public statements in the pre-War years echo a vision shared by many who never read Godwin; and the resonances of that vision are still felt today, by many who have little awareness of the thinking of Neville Chamberlain—or even of Winston Churchill—during that fateful era.

Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister of Britain in May 1937, a little more than two years before World War II began, but at a time when international tensions were already beginning to mount. Japan's invasion of China and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia were already history, as was Hitler's repudiation of treaties limiting German rearmament. To Chamberlain the need of the hour was for governments "to put aside their mutual fears and suspicions", their "misunderstandings". This became a recurrent theme in his speeches. Along with it went the often reiterated theme that "personal contact" between heads of state was essential to dispelling misunderstandings. In this effort he called on the press of "both countries" (Britain and Germany) to show restraint and toleration. Far from trying to arouse the British against potential adversaries, Chamberlain urged that "we try to understand their mentality".

Although heads of state had met on various occasions, such as the Congress of Vienna in 1815 or at Versailles in 1919,

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[7] William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793; University of Toronto Press, 1969), vol. II, p. 143. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (The Modern Library, 1922), p. 115. Bernard Shaw, *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism* (Brentano's Publishers, 1928), pp. 155, 154. Thorstein Veblen, *The Nature of Peace* (The Viking Press, 1945), p. 366. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, vol. II, chs XVI, XIX.

[8] Alexander Hamilton, *et al.*, *The Federalist Papers*, p. 87.

[9] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, vol. II, pp. 193, 180, 146, 150-151.

[10] See, for example, Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions*, pp. 76-77.

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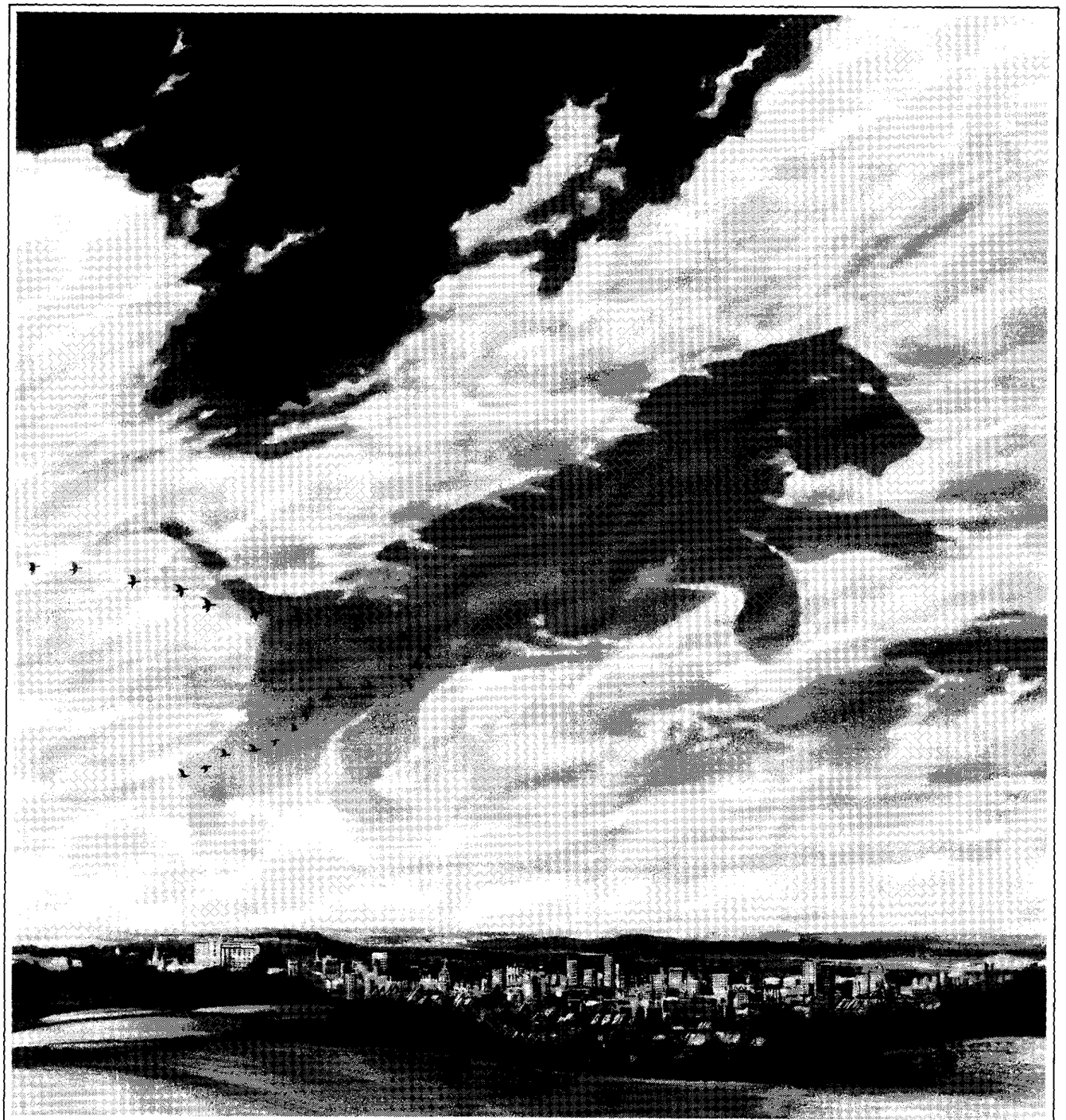

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Chamberlain originated summit diplomacy in the current sense of repeated meetings of heads of state to discuss outstanding differences among potential adversaries. Returning from a meeting with Mussolini in Rome, Chamberlain declared that the "quarrel" between the two countries "rested largely on unfounded suspicions and misunderstandings" and that "once we had broken the ice" they were able to reach substantial agreement, which "resulted in a perceptible easing of the tension" in Europe. Returning from his historic meeting with Hitler at Munich in 1938, Chamberlain repeated a familiar theme of trying to see the other party's viewpoint. "I have realised vividly how Herr Hitler feels", he announced. Later, in the House of Commons, he urged that "the House ought to recognise the difficulty of a man in that position".

What is today called "moral equivalence" was a keynote in Chamberlain's discussions of aggression throughout the 1930s. He declared, "There is not a country or a government that wants to see a European war." He spoke of Japan's invasion of China as "this unhappy conflict" which "can only result in increasing damage to each of the two great nations concerned", while "we, who have a long tradition of friendly relations with both of them, will anxiously await the day when their differences shall be composed and they can once again turn their attention to the development of their resources and the welfare of their respective peoples." Of the fascist uprising against the Spanish republic—an uprising backed by aid from Hitler and Mussolini—Chamberlain said: "His Majesty's Government have tried to keep the balance even between both sides, and to back neither". Chamberlain referred neutrally to Spain as "France's unhappy neighbour", as he had referred to the "unhappy conflict" in China, and as he would later refer to "*the unhappy Sudetenland*" in Czechoslovakia. Chamberlain regretted that the press portrayed the Spanish civil war as part of a larger clash between rival international political blocs with antagonistic ideologies.

MORAL EQUIVALENCE was helped along by Chamberlain's statements that the people of potential enemy nations were "human beings like ourselves", that "I have no intention, no desire, to treat the great German people otherwise than as I would have our own people treated". He spoke of "the desire of the German people for peace", of "the desire of the two peoples" of Britain and Germany "never to go to war with one another again".[11] The correctness of each of those statements in isolation is not at issue. What is at issue is whether they were relevant to the momentous issues of war and peace with totalitarian governments—and whether the dangerously naive misconceptions they promoted among the peoples of democratic nations made war more likely.

Not everyone saw these events as Chamberlain did. From the earliest days of the Nazi dictatorship, Winston Churchill voiced not only specific warnings but also general principles typical of those with the constrained vision. As with Burke, so with Churchill, military power was the key to survival and freedom. He spoke of "our individual liberties and civic rights, which our forefathers gained for us in many a hard-fought field", and added, for his own time: "Britain's hour of weakness is Europe's hour of danger." As early as 1933, before Hitler had been in power for a year, Churchill warned of Nazi Germany, where "the philosophy of blood lust is being inculcated into their youth in a manner unparallelled since the days of barbarism".[12] The rise of Hitler he saw as "opening the floodgates of evil upon German, and perhaps upon European, civilisation".[13] To Churchill, there was no "misunderstanding" between the "two sides".

PART OF CHAMBERLAIN'S STRATEGY for peace was "to remove legitimate causes of grievance". His objective was "a general settlement of the grievances of the world without war".[14] Here was the one-day-at-a-time approach, as if there were a given number of grievances which could be reduced by judicious concessions.

Churchill never accepted that vision, in this or other contexts. "Our concessions", he said when discussing British policies in India, would "only be used as the starting-point for new demands." He applied the same reasoning to relations with Germany, declaring as early as 1932 that "every concession which has been made . . . has been followed immediately by a fresh demand". He continued to repeat this theme over the years, pointing out that, after the Anglo-Italian agreement of 1938, "while the ink was scarcely dry on the signatures, new demands were put forward".[15]

To Neville Chamberlain, however, it was a question of trying to "settle our differences" *seriatim*:

> "What we have to do is take the danger spots one after another, eliminating them one by one, and if we can go on doing that, we shall advance steadily and surely toward our goal until the time will come when we can finally put all our fears behind us and go about our business once more in tranquillity of mind."[16]

The distasteful connotation which the word "appeasement" has acquired as a result of the tragic failure of Chamberlain's policies should not blind us to the meaning and implication that it had at the time. To appease someone is not to surrender, or even to satisfy them, but merely to put them off with a partial concession, as a snack appeases hunger. To those who envision a world of finite grievances, which must be prevented from flaring up into war, appeasement in this sense is a rational policy. It is that vision which must be re-examined.

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[11] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), pp. 14; pp. 52, 74, 97, 105, 133; pp. 14, 34, 50, 52, 74, 97, 98, 105, 106, 112, 131, 133, 174, 196, 210, 212, 234, 252, 253, 254; pp. 34, 40, 51, 52, 98, 120, 164, 175, 187, 188, 197, 209, 210, 216, 230, 242, 243, 250, 252, 271; p. 34; p. 53; p. 133; p. 174; p. 208; p. 20; p. 27; p. 37; p. 150; p. 163; p. 19; p. 252; p. 286; p. 210.

[12] *Churchill Speaks*, ed. Robert Rhodes James. pp. 566, 567.

[13] Winston Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, p. 121.

[14] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, pp. 36, 40.

[15] *Churchill Speaks*, pp. 517, 552, 663.

[16] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, pp. 132, 135. See also p. 107.

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The belief that war is fundamentally irrational—that if emotion-laden crises can be defused, peace can be preserved, as being in everyone's best interests—runs through Chamberlain's whole policy of appeasement. That is what gives coherence to his repeated calls for restrained words, at home and abroad, for his reiterated theme of "personal contacts" between heads of state, his repeated depictions of the horrors of war, and the recurrent theme of "trying to remove the causes of strife or war", "bringing to peaceful and orderly solution any issues liable to interrupt friendly relations between nations", "a spirit of mutual accommodation and good will", "the removal, as far as may be practicable, of all causes of possible conflict in the amelioration of grievances between one country and another", seeing that "no major cause of difference or dispute remains unsettled". As late as January 1939, Chamberlain declared: "I remain convinced that there are no differences, however serious, that cannot be solved without recourse to war, by consultation and negotiation."[17]

THE POINT HERE is not to embarrass a dead man, or to show that Chamberlain was naive about Hitler. That is all history. What is urgently relevant to the present is that Chamberlain's position was perfectly logical, given the assumptions—the vision—from which he was operating. It is the same vision from which many are operating at this moment.

The key assumption of finite grievances or demands, reducible by concessions, was falsified not only by the general course of events but also by explicit evidence which became available after World War II. For example, when the grievances and demands of the German minority in the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia were all accepted and agreed to by the Czech government in 1938, under pressure from Chamberlain, pro-Nazi Sudeten leaders were momentarily embarrassed—but proceeded, under orders from Hitler, to raise new demands and foment new violence.[18] Their grievances—some quite real—were nevertheless essentially instrumental: to gain territory for Germany from Czechoslovakia, reducing the military defensibility of Eastern Europe, and shifting the international balance of military power against Britain and France. Concessions were not about to placate them or deflect them from that goal.

Chamberlain's one-day-at-a-time concessions policy underestimated the long-run effects in yet another way. There were factions within the German Army sufficiently alarmed at the dangers to which Hitler's adventures were exposing Germany to be considering a military coup. Concessions to Hitler not only lowered the dangers which prompted this plot, but also cut the ground from under any appeal the military could have made thereafter to the German people for their support after a coup. Many times in a later era, Western concessions to the Soviet Union have been urged in hopes of strengthening more "moderate" or peaceful elements within the Soviet government. But the degree of moderation is itself a function of the dangers of immoderation, as the German generals' 1938 plot demonstrated, and the success of immoderation in gaining concessions reduces rather than enhances the moderate position.

DETERRENCE INCLUDES the military strength not only to defend against an attack but also to strike back, and both presuppose the will to do so, not only on the part of leaders but also on the part of the public whose support they need. The prospect of alliances with other, similarly-disposed nations is likewise part of deterrence. Churchill urged all these—increased military power, an aroused public, and alliances—and the Chamberlain government resisted all.

Even as Chancellor of the Exchequer, before becoming Prime Minister, Chamberlain set severe limits on a British military build-up in response to the rapid rearmament of Germany. As Prime Minister, he deprecated "this senseless competition in rearmament which continually cancels out the efforts that each nation makes to secure an advantage over the others."[19] The notion that there was something *irrational* about military build-ups runs through Chamberlain's pre-War speeches—a note quite different from that of those with the constrained vision, for whom it was an inevitable price to pay for freedom and national survival, as sensible for a peace-loving nation as for an aggressor.

Chamberlain was by no means a pacifist, or even on the pacifist end of the political spectrum of his time. The Labour Party leader Clement Attlee declared in 1934, "We on our side are for total disarmament". A year earlier, at Oxford University, a motion to "in no circumstances" fight for "King and country" was carried by 275 to 153 among the students, setting off a round of similar votes at other British universities.[20] Britain, France, and the United States all cut their military budgets substantially in the early to mid-1930s. Stanley Baldwin, Chamberlain's predecessor as Prime Minister, openly confessed in 1936 that he would not have dared to advocate defence spending during the 1933 elections:

> "Suppose I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming, and that we must rearm, does anybody think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment?"[21]

In short, Chamberlain was speaking, not simply for himself, but for his times—and for the pervasive vision of his time. It was this vision which stood in the way of military deterrence. Churchill was a voice in the wilderness, and as late as 1938 narrowly escaped a vote of censure by his constituents.

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[17] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, pp. 21, 28, 34, 76; pp. 34, 40, 120, 209, 210, 216, 230, 240, 242, 250, 271; pp. 65, 86, 106, 149, 156, 257.

[18] William L. Shirer, *The Nightmare Years* (Little, Brown & Co., 1984), pp. 332-339.

[19] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (second edition, Fawcett Books, 1961), p. 63; Telford Taylor, *Munich: The Price of Peace* (Doubleday, Hodder & Stoughton, 1979), p. 997; Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 45.

[20] Telford Taylor, *Munich . . .* , p. 213; A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, pp. 197-199.

[21] Quoted in Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Houghton Mifflin, 1948), p. 216.

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Chamberlain's assertion that "in war there are no winners" echoed the philosophy implicit in the question which Burke had dismissed with contempt nearly a century and a half earlier: What do you *get* from war? To Chamberlain the military build-up of the late 1930s was "a spectacle of human madness and folly". He was certain that his policy "expressed the will of this people" and trusted that it would mark "the turning-point not towards war, which wins nothing, cures nothing, ends nothing, but towards a more wholesome era when reason will take the place of force and threats will make way for cool and well-marshalled arguments."[22]

BY CONTRAST, Churchill's vision saw war as natural, with peace being what needed explaining—and costly means of maintenance. Churchill believed that war had been "unceasing for millions of years". He added:

> "Indeed the lucid intervals of peace and order only occur in human history after armaments in the hands of strong governments have come into being. And civilisation has been nursed only in cradles guarded by superior weapons and discipline."

Given this perspective, "disarmament", according to Churchill, "may bring war nearer rather than peace". In 1934, he declared: "False ideas have been spread about the country that disarmament means peace." Of Britain he said: "We are vulnerable as we have never been before." More pointedly: "We are a rich and easy prey."

Massive German rearmament forced Chamberlain reluctantly into increases in British defence spending—over the opposition of the Labour Party, which resisted what Churchill called "this tiny, timid, tentative, tardy increase".[23] Chamberlain announced "parity" as his military goal, though it remained a politically contrived "parity" on paper, as Germany surged ahead militarily. In terms of national will, there was nothing approaching parity, for Chamberlain's muted and conciliatory rhetoric failed to arouse the British public to the dangers. After referring neutrally to "unhappy" events in China, Spain, and Czechoslovakia, to "the inclusion of Austria in the German Reich" as "a case where two states desired to join together", Chamberlain could hardly expect strong public response to any clarion call. Neither did he strengthen the public's resolve or his own hand in dealing with Hitler at Munich when he described the Czech crisis as "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing".[24] In short, Chamberlain's failure to arouse the public limited his own options as Prime Minister, when he faced each successive international crisis handicapped by the public attitudes and expectations created by his handling of previous crises.

THE THIRD ASPECT of deterrence—allies—was approached by Chamberlain with the same one-day-at-a-time philosophy. The great danger he saw was that treaty commitments could take the war-or-peace decision out of the British government's hands, and get them embroiled in wars they would not otherwise have chosen to enter. According to Chamberlain, "We ought to reserve to ourselves the right to say whether we consider it necessary to enter into such a war or not, and we ought not to hand over to others the determination of our action when it might involve such tremendous consequences to ourselves."

In addition, Chamberlain resisted alliances because they "aggravate the tendency towards the establishment of exclusive groups of nations"—a tendency he considered "inimical to the prospects of European peace". At the time he said this—March 1938—Germany and Italy were already in an alliance with each other and with Japan. Once again, an unpleasant reality—whether a military build-up or the formation of alliances—was seen as something to be unilaterally resisted, even as a response to a growing danger. "Our policy", Chamberlain said, "is not one of dividing Europe into two opposing *blocs* of countries, each arming against the other amidst a growing flood of ill-will on both sides, which can only end in war."[25]

CHURCHILL'S APPROACH to alliances was directly the opposite—even when it was a question of an alliance with the Soviet Union, which he detested. In March of 1939, six months before World War II began, he said:

> "If you are ready to be an ally of Russia in time of war, which is the Supreme test, the great occasion of all, if you are ready to join hands with Russia in the defence of Poland, which you have guaranteed, and of Romania, why should you shrink from becoming the ally of Russia now, when you may by that very fact prevent the breaking out of war?"

What Churchill proposed represented not simply a different policy but a different way of thinking. It was not Chamberlain's one-day-at-a-time approach, taking each crisis in isolation, but an attempt to assess and change a whole sequence of events—not by articulated persuasion but by changed incentives. A year earlier, months before Munich, Churchill had urged Britain and France to band together with other European powers in a mutual defence agreement. But when the Soviet Union at that time proposed consultation with the Western powers, Chamberlain responded negatively:

> "Their proposal would appear to involve less a consultation with a view to settlement than a concerting of action against an eventuality that has not yet arisen."

The one-day-at-a-time approach could hardly have been put more plainly.[26]

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[22] *Churchill Speaks*, p. 663. Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, pp. 79, 140, 288.
[23] *Churchill Speaks*, pp. 588, 564, 579, 571, 583, 582.
[24] Telford Taylor, *Munich . . .*, pp. 611-616. Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 99, 174.
[25] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, pp. 84, 96, 86, 97.
[26] *Churchill Speaks*, pp. 683, 649. Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 85.

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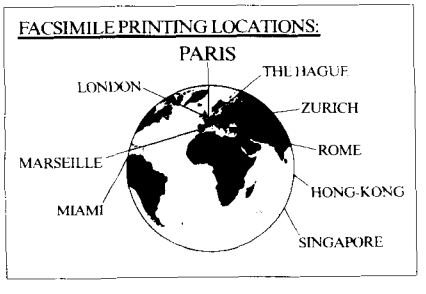

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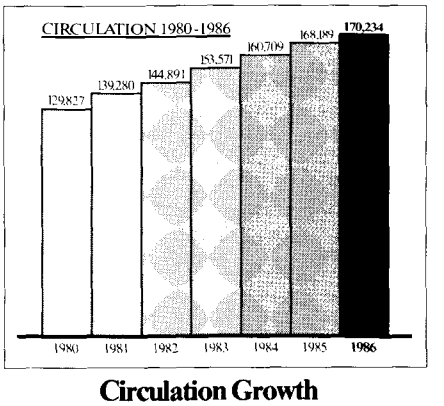

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WHETHER IN domestic or in foreign policy, articulation has for centuries been central to the unconstrained vision and peripheral to the constrained vision, in which man responds to incentives rather than words.[27] Neville Chamberlain was not a philosopher, nor would the whole span of his political acts and beliefs exemplify the unconstrained vision. Yet, as between Chamberlain and Churchill—who was an intellectual by trade as well as a politician—clearly Churchill had an unequivocally more constrained vision, indeed a classically constrained vision. "The idea that dictators can be appeased by kind words and minor concessions is doomed to disappointment", he said. He also disdained another kind of articulation which has remained characteristic of the unconstrained vision:

> "Many people think that the best way to escape war is to dwell upon its horrors, and to imprint them vividly upon the minds of the younger generation. They flaunt the grisly photographs before their eyes. They fill their ears with tales of carnage. They dilate upon the ineptitude of generals and admirals. They denounce the crime and insensate folly of human strife."

Churchill regarded such words as pointless when addressed to a country without a plan for conquest, and futile when addressed to a country with such plans. Even if invaders could somehow be convinced by the general argument, he doubted that they would "go back quietly home".

> "They might say, 'You are rich, we are poor. You seem well fed, we are hungry. You have been victorious, we have been defeated. You have valuable colonies, we have none. You have your Navy, where is ours? You have had the past, let us have the future.' Above all, I fear, they would say 'You are weak and we are strong'."

To Churchill, the issue was not one of "well-marshalled arguments", as Chamberlain called them, but of incentives created by deterrents to offset the temptations offered by undefended prizes:

> "A country like ours, possessed of immense territory and wealth, whose defences have been neglected, cannot avoid war by dilating upon its horrors, or even by a continuous display of pacific qualities, or by ignoring the fate of the victims of aggression elsewhere. War will be avoided, in present circumstances, only by the accumulation of deterrents against the aggressor."[28]

Neville Chamberlain was not so naive as to imagine that he could talk Hitler out of aggression. But his basic premise was that war was so *mutually* undesirable that preventing particular grievances from escalating, together with a modest defensive capacity, could hold off hostilities long enough for emotions and political pressures on all sides to subside, so that the crucial task of negotiating mutually agreeable terms could go forward. Negotiations were, to some extent, a *substitute* for military strength while, in the constrained vision, negotiations were simply a channel through which strength was exerted. Churchill conceded that it was better to "jaw, jaw" than to "war, war" but articulation was never a substitute for power, to those with the constrained vision. To Chamberlain, however, it was a question of using "the methods of reason and diplomacy rather than those of menace and of force".[29]

Scepticism about articulation, among those with the constrained vision, extends not only to its presumed ineffectiveness but even to its being positively counterproductive. "It has been the misfortune (not, as these gentlemen think it, the glory) of this age that everything is to be discussed", Burke said. Even reason, he said, "loses its force" by frequent repetition.[30] The larger point is that articulation conveys much more than the specific message articulated. Depending on the circumstances, the unarticulated message may overwhelm the words themselves.

THE NOTION THAT DISCUSSION could ever be counterproductive seems never to have occurred to Chamberlain, though perhaps no man in history demonstrated it so tragically. Despite Mussolini's violation of his previous agreement to remove Italian troops from the Spanish civil war, Chamberlain agreed to fly to Rome in 1938 for discussions with him. (Neither Hitler nor Mussolini ever flew to London.) What this conveyed was enough to cause Anthony Eden to resign as Foreign Minister. It is now known that Chamberlain's willingness to talk, even under humiliating conditions, contributed to the contempt which Hitler and Mussolini felt[31]—which in turn emboldened them in the course of action which led to World War II. Chamberlain was aware of the traditions of preserving national dignity in international relations, but simply regarded this as less important than the opportunity to talk, when he made a third visit to Hitler in 1938:

> "I know very well that I was laying myself open to criticism on the ground that I was detracting from the dignity of a British Prime Minister. . . . But I felt that in such a crisis, where the issues at stake were so vital for millions of human beings, such considerations could not be allowed to count."[32]

In a one-day-at-a-time framework, it must always seem grotesque to jeopardise the lives of millions over mere tradition and protocol concerning dignity and "national honour". But such traditions have not evolved from nothing or for no reason. "National honour" is not a mere vanity or will o' the wisp. It is an unarticulated message—one which can save lives. Forty million people died in a war unleashed because the dictators had developed such contempt for the West's willingness to resist. Their contempt for Chamberlain, as the leader of the democratic nations, was crucial to their decision.

As it turned out, of course, it was a tragic miscalculation for all. Eventually, when Hitler's plans became unmistakable after the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, Britain de-

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[27] See Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions*, pp. 49-52, 64-65.
[28] *Churchill Speaks*, p. 650, 586, 645.
[29] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 91.
[30] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790; Everyman's Library, 1967), p. 88; *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, vol. VI, p. 211.
[31] See Telford Taylor, *Munich . . .*, pp. 951, 952.
[32] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 187.

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cleared war. It took Hitler completely by surprise. He clearly did not believe that Chamberlain had it in him—and the Prime Minister's own conduct contributed to that belief. The supreme irony was that it was Chamberlain who declared World War II.

3. *Implications*

THE POLICIES OF the British Prime Minister reflected a coherent vision of the causes of war and peace. Even his *ad hoc* responses to the international crises of the 1930s were a logical corollary of that vision (judicial activism is another *ad hoc* corollary). Winston Churchill's opposite reading of the situations of the 1930s also reflected his very different vision of the general causes of war and peace. Wars being rationally inexplicable to Chamberlain, festering grievances, misunderstandings, and emotionalism were prominent among the reasons he saw for wars breaking out nevertheless. His efforts to preserve peace addressed these presumed causes. Grievances and demands were met by concessions and appeasement. Misunderstandings were headed off by "personal contact" with potential adversaries—or so he thought. Early in his career as Prime Minister, Chamberlain declared, "The old stand-upon-your-dignity methods are no longer applicable to modern conditions."[33] He muted his rhetoric to avoid emotional escalation and urged the press to do the same.

Churchill's vision was the centuries-old constrained vision, in which war can be expected whenever there are insufficient deterrents and sufficient temptations. He looked for the causes of peace—military strength, demonstrations of the national will, and military alliances to preserve the international balance of power. Churchill repeatedly called for greater military preparations and alliances, throughout the 1930s. He had faith that the public would respond to leadership and saw the West's desperate efforts for peace as part of the reason for World War II:

> "We did not make this war, we did not seek it. We did all we could to avoid it. We did too much to avoid it."

"There never was a war in all history easier to prevent by timely action than the one which has just desolated such great areas of the globe", Churchill said, shortly after World War II.[34]

Foreign policy does not, of course, exist in a vacuum, especially when deadly issues of war and peace are involved—nor is it necessarily simply a reflection of abstract beliefs. However, when the concrete circumstances in which Chamberlain's foreign policy existed are examined, the crucial role of his vision becomes even clearer. Britain and France were not weak or isolated nations forced to do the best they could in the face of massive external threats. As of the early-to-mid-1930s, they held overwhelming military superiority over Germany—a fact of which Hitler was as well aware as they were. While the German generals were horrified by some of Hitler's early aggressive moves, the *Führer* himself was confident that the will to resist was lacking in the Western democracies. When he stationed troops in the Rhineland in 1936, in violation of a treaty, Hitler said: "We shall now see whether or not the French have real statesmen; if so they will not give us time, and will fall upon us."[35]

In short, during the early stages of Hitler's military build-up, France alone possessed the power to stop him, without Britain's help. From the standpoint of sheer power, the options facing both countries were vast. But Churchill, like Hitler, recognised that the fundamental deficiency was that of national will. "France, though armed to the teeth, is pacifist to the core", Churchill said in 1932. In Britain, Hitler's "words of reassurance" were "lapped up by those who have been so tragically wrong about Germany in the past", Churchill said in 1935.[36] It was not in objective material forces but in their vision of the world that the Western powers were dangerously vulnerable. Only after a succession of escalating demands were met was Germany strong enough to begin its military aggressions of World War II.

Whatever arguments may be made as to whether the events of that era were parallel to those of today, the visions of that era were clearly the same.

It is not only the arguments of the 1930s but even the scenes of the 1930s which are still with us. Before Chamberlain or Hitler ever came to power, Churchill described a scene all too familiar today—a leader returning from a summit conference with an agreement:

> "If we look back on those July days, when the Prime Minister [Ramsay MacDonald] was welcomed in triumph on his return, with all the Cabinet and Under-Secretaries drawn up like a row of Grenadiers of varying sizes at the railway station, we can see how absurd were the claims which were then advanced that Lausanne had 'saved Europe', and that a 'new era' had opened for the world."

The year was 1932. The Lausanne Conference has long since been forgotten by all but the most conscientious historians. What should not be forgotten is what Churchill called at the time the "inexhaustible gullibility" of those who took it seriously.[37]

There are of course differences created by the nuclear age. The most important of these differences may be that there is little hope of recovery from a vision that leads from perilous weakness to war or capitulation.

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[33] Neville Chamberlain, *In Search of Peace*, p. 33.

[34] *Churchill Speaks*, pp. 608, 612, 649, 650, 661, 662; pp. 572-573; p. 786; p. 884.

[35] Telford Taylor, *Munich . . .*, p. 95.

[36] *Churchill Speaks*, p. 554. Winston S. Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, pp. 268-269.

[37] *Churchill Speaks*, p. 550, 551.

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Four Poems by Elizabeth Jennings

Only

It is sad and theatrical and also it
Is going on everywhere. It means
Just changing properties and scenes,
Lowering the curtain, dimming the lit
Footlights. Of course what the play means

Alters the actions. But even so
They have much in common. The chosen theme
Is love or death, fast or slow,
Possessing the quality of a dream,
Never mind where the sleepers go.

I saw it myself but, of course I was
Very involved. I knew the man
Playing the lead. When the play began
I had no idea at all of the close.
It was very dark. I was part of the plan

The playwright intended, but wasn't told.
So I came on unprepared. The script
Was pat on other's tongues. I was left
Wordless, tearful, trying to hold
My own but, of course, I hadn't been briefed

Or rehearsed either. I took the call
With the others but wanted to get away
And suffer remorse alone. The day
My friend died, we quarrelled cruelly and all
Was dark and wordless for months. The play

Was put on elsewhere, almost everywhere
With others playing the bereaved friend.
It took two years for the wound to mend.
To leave me with the play we are
Acting daily and cannot end.

The Shapes of Poetry

It is the colour of time
When the sky agrees with the hour
It is the bird of prey
Also the cat awake.
Call it the calm of sleep
When there are no dreams or
Say it's the touch of truth
You never knew before.
You must dig very deep
And pause and stare out stars,
It is the shadowed door
Where words have watch to keep.

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All that Departing

All that departing and parting
And the wounding others and lonely recrimination.
I learnt very early gifted children are many
And none is very special,
I learnt early too the pain that imagination
Can cause but its joys were vast and the time was now
And only now, it was a circular thing,
It was often a golden ring
In which my spirit danced and I was excited,
Much too excited and could not pause or sleep,
Could not stop running and jumping. It was in fairgrounds
I learnt—I only realise today—
That the flashing gilt horses, the bright blue swings woke up in me
The sense of the world's wonder and multitudinous
Shapes and patterns and sounds.
The hurdy-gurdy took me up to levels
Where only Mozart can carry me now, and now
Is brief and the future's on me so fast as it was not
In the sleepy leisurely moments when I lay
With my eyes half-closed yet watching the galloping horses,
Riding upon them, their bodies plump to my thighs,
My hands on their manes. They galloped me into the dark
Of the real dreams of sleep.

But I speak of departing and parting
And family quarrels and angry words and the hurting
Disclosures of cruel truths we cannot retract
Though we only said them in fury.
I know to the quick that each one of us is special,
Unique, particular, odd, lovable, stubborn,
Bound in the flesh and beating against barriers,
Loving the dark bodily pleasures but feeling
Always let down much later.
For I know that we all have eaten the shining apple
Plucked it, gripped it, ruined each other with it
And yet there are transient Edens where music plays
Ineffable joys and we know that this planet is not
One among all the other orbs and stars
Rolling around the sun but piloted, ordered
By a huge spirit our little ones are part of,
A spirit which music more closely than any endeavour
Holds on to us longer until there is no more departing
And only sorrow for hurtings.

Enough

A string is plucked, a word
Uttered, then silence till
A robin bleeds the snow.
Fingers are frozen, minds
Shrink to small purposes.
A thread of careful sound,
A rise of raging air,
Then purpose found.

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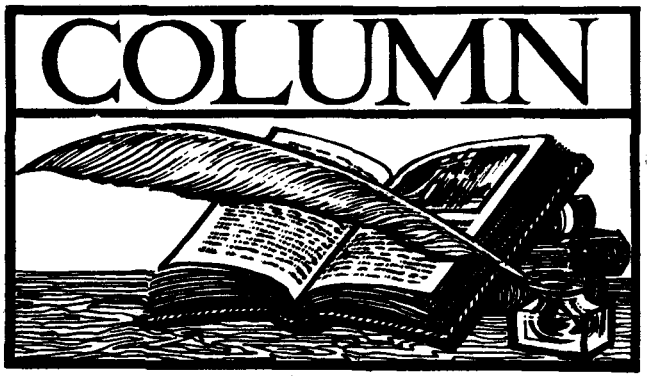

"TO SNARE THE WORLD in a sentence is . . . to take out a title-deed on it; yet the world which most 20th-century writers live in is patently not one which can be owned."

For the moment, I'll leave you to guess the author of that rueful remark. I came across it while trawling the archives of ENCOUNTER for thoughts to celebrate this present 400th issue. So many heavy volumes, so many pages, so many words that still live and sting.

"Why is it that Revisionist Social Democracy is now, evidently, coming apart at the seams?" Not a comment on David Owen's former Party in 1987, but a reflection by Stephen Haseler in 1976. "The Christian religion is primarily concerned with men's private affairs, and only secondarily and consequentially with their public affairs. It is indeed a protest against the primacy of politics." A reproach addressed to the Liverpudlian clergy or the Church of England's inner-cities report? No: an opinion from Christopher Hollis in 1954. And how about this as a motto for monetarists? "Inflation is a tragedy that makes a whole people cynical, hard-hearted, and indifferent." Thomas Mann in a 1942 lecture recalling his German experience, published here for the first time just after the first oil-price shock.

Some such quotations make more permanent claims. Arnold Toynbee admits: "History is elusive." Christopher Sykes echoes him: "The watershed moments of history are always fascinating to read about. It is very doubtful if they really exist." And Golo Mann is equally sceptical: "Historians tend, and have always tended, to identify men with ideas, as though we had all stepped into reality out of textbooks of cultural history or sociology."

Philosophy inspires more lapidary brevity. "Fortune", declares Hans J. Morgenthau, "smiles only on those who concede her the last word." "Truthfulness", affirms Herbert Lüthy, "is not only a great, it is a difficult virtue." "First impressions", writes Melvin Lasky, "are the opium of the sentimental traveller."

Literature, by contrast, evokes greater verbosity. W. H. Auden ruminates on *lacunae* he glimpsed in 1953. "Two themes, which in the past had always been fruitful sources of inspiration to poets, have almost vanished from the poetry written in the last fifty years, namely, the public figure as a hero for panegyric or a villain for satire, and the *polis*, the particular political-economic-religious organism in which any given poet happens to be a cell." David Lodge, a score of years later, reports on a curious discovery. "Experiments in the sociology of literature have shown that the total number of recognised 'classics' at any given moment remains fairly constant, though the actual constituents of the total change from one generation or social group to another." But "some writers", George Watson points out, "survive less by what they assert than in the manner of their remembrance."

Politics, of course, is a constant subject for aphorists. Characteristically, Milton Friedman reminds us that "Freedom is very far from being the natural state of mankind." "Power", adds Hallam Tennyson, "is perhaps the one taste for which the appetite grows keener with the years." And Gillian Tindall is similarly disenchanted: "No one should make the mistake of thinking that equality of opportunity leads to 'a classless society'."

Naturally enough in a British magazine, UK politics looms large. "One of the symptoms of 'the English disease'", as Stuart Maclure stresses, "is an excessive hypochondria." On the other hand, "British democracy"—Max Beloff 30 years ago—"has been as successful as it has largely because it has succeeded in being so undemocratic." Against which, Alastair Buchan in 1975: "There was until a generation ago a strong liberal and Liberal tradition in British politics which is now turning in its sleep as the decline of British fortunes and increasing domestic tension make the older notions of Toryism or the doctrines of the Labour Party less and less relevant."

And finally, as its name implies, ENCOUNTER has always extended hands across the sea. Some of its sharpest home truths have consequently focused on the United States. Regretfully: "The two most successful creations of American movies are the gangster and the Westerner: men with guns" (Robert Warshow). Pessimistically: "These continual differences between America and Britain make it impossible to inspire Asia with any faith in the West" (Woodrow Wyatt). Quizzically: "Through the 200 years since Independence, when the American mind was busy making itself an America, it has also been marvellously busy making itself a Europe" (Malcolm Bradbury). Uneasily: "In its Bicentennial year the United States still has lessons to give Europe, but perhaps those lessons no longer convey the rational teachings of the Enlightenment" (Anthony Hartley). Resignedly: "Because no one wants to talk or think about Viet Nam any more, many Americans will gladly assent to the notion that what finally happened there is all for the best" (Stephen Miller).

LOOKING THROUGH 399 issues of the magazine is rather like reading one's own cuttings book, amazed by past precocity and daunted at having to match it. Searching this time for epigrams, apophthegms, and other pregnant sayings, I'm struck by the fact that they were far more frequent in the 1950s than they are today. It may be that today's contributors are less brilliant or less glib: but I don't think so. The reasons, I suspect, are twofold; and one of them has to do with changes in the literary-journalistic climate.

The first reason for the apparent decline of the jewelled phrase is a greater sense of ease between writer and reader. In the early days of any publication, those who write for it are

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unfamiliar with their audience. Like the first act on a vaudeville stage, they face the customers cold. So they put on their best smiles, flash their jauntiest gestures, trot out their most reliable gags. "Politics is the art of the reprehensible"—"Art is the politics of the imagination"—"Imagination is the electorate of art." No one knows, or cares much, what these ringing phrases mean: but they sound pretty good at the beginning of an article, calling us to attention like a drill-sergeant's "Squa-a-ad—shun!" Later, as the audience warms up, the performers can be more relaxed. Writers and readers begin to have a sense of each other: voices drop a little: subject outweighs "style".

And if this has happened over 400 issues of ENCOUNTER, it's been abetted by something else. That something is the influence of broadcasting, and especially television, on the way journalists write.

A generation ago, there was quite a sharp contrast between the news and the literary pages of the serious press. News items, then as now, would be constructed on the wire-service "lead" system, with a shortish first sentence encapsulating the story—who, what, where, when, and just possibly why. Because sub-editors cut from the bottom, the report would be shaped, as it were, like a tadpole, dwindling towards the tail. Subordinate clauses would be rare, subjunctives unthinkable. No attempt would be made to turn the piece into an article, rounding on itself like a whiting with its tail in its mouth.

Feature stories might be more ambitious; and literary pieces would look more like essays reprinted from—or intended for—books. Careful syntax, irony, allusion, semicolons, relative pronouns, recondite tenses: all might be enlisted to give an article substance and subtlety. It would read like the product of a pen rather than a typewriter, still less a personal computer screen. A certain formality, like dressing for dinner or the theatre, would provide a sense of occasion: be still, be patient, be attentive—that was the discreet subtext.

Now, of course, formality is rarer; and there are losses as

The First Ten Years. . . .

READING THE FILE of ENCOUNTER, **I asked myself what were the articles that I remembered most easily and with most pleasure?**

One was, of course, Miss Mitford's article. Another was Lionel Trilling's article on "Mansfield Park"; another was Mr Colin Welch's assault on Miss Enid Blyton. But, of course, I remember others. There was Sir Isaiah Berlin's dazzling evocation of the great age of the Russian intelligentsia before the Crimean War, a brilliant work of historical reconstruction that ought to be made compulsory reading in Moscow, and in certain cultural caves of Western Europe. It was in ENCOUNTER **that Sir Charles Snow's famous description of the two cultures got its first wide audience. It was in** ENCOUNTER **that I learned what astonishing difficulties Mr Arthur Waley had had to face in translating the "Tale of Genji". (Even if the implication was that Mr Waley was, in effect, the author of the great novel so many of us have read with dazzled admiration, all the better for Mr Waley.) There have been some recent controversies like the discussion of the realities of Castro's Cuba and of "Lady Chatterley's Lover". In** ENCOUNTER **one can trace the history of the Pasternak controversy and the comforting revelation of how far in Poland, in Hungary, and even in Russia itself the attempt to make the mind captive, to outdo the Holy Synod, has failed. One can even hope that "the hundred flowers" will flourish in China when Chairman Mao and his adulators have gone to their ancestors.**

BUT IT WOULD BE UNJUST *to* ENCOUNTER *to think of it exclusively as a "journal de combat". It has been a forum for literary and philosophical controversies, a forum in which the Oxford analysts were discussed with no visible political overtones.* ENCOUNTER *has treated the fine arts seriously and has illustrated them in a way that its great ancestors could not have rivalled. There has been a lot of good verse and (who knows?) some poetry published. There have been admirable short stories and admirable and important testimonies from behind the Iron Curtain. There have been controversies exciting to academics like the debate on the rise of the gentry in 17th-century England. There have been apologias and rejoinders, reviews half as long as those in the "Edinburgh" and perhaps, at times, not much less severe though, we may hope, not so violently partisan. ("Partisan Review" has given a more respectable tone to the word than it had a century ago, and in Mr Dwight Macdonald, one of the most valued and valiant contributors to* ENCOUNTER.*) We have had accounts, increasingly pessimistic, of the Bhoodan movement in India, and controversies over the character of English culture.*

ONLY TWO **important aspects of human life have not been so much neglected as ignored. Religion, even in the traditional sense of controversy and name-calling, has been missing. And possibly more significant, although the readers of** ENCOUNTER **have more than once had their attention called to the consequence of science (in discussions of** THE BOMB**), there has been little about science as such. Sir Charles Snow's diagnosis of "the Two Cultures" in** ENCOUNTER **has been borne out by the practice of the journal.**

BUT, READING *the file of the first ten years of* ENCOUNTER, *I have been struck by how much is still as lively and valuable as when it was first published. A contributor argued that articles in a periodical like this* **should** *be ephemeral. It is a defensible point of view and many, or at any rate, some, articles were ephemeral, in a good sense. But many were timely without being ephemeral, and* ENCOUNTER *has both reflected the temper of our time of troubles and affected the climate of opinion for good ends.* **Ad multos annos.**

D. W. Brogan

From his preface to "Encounters", an anthology of the first ten years, published in 1963 in London (Weidenfeld & Nicolson) and New York (Basic Books and Simon & Schuster paperback).

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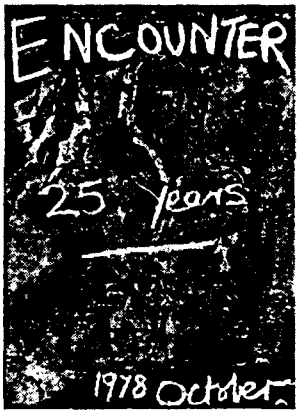
well as gains. I personally regret the infrequency of epigrams. But I have to admit that, while literary articles have grown more demotic, some news stories have become more literate. Perhaps, after all, a common culture is inching imperceptibly nearer.

I CERTAINLY suspected this a few weeks ago when I attended a conference in Vienna. Billed as discussing the "Political Responsibility of Intellectuals", it threatened to be one of those occasions when Arthur Koestler's "call girls" (jet-setting, ever-ready, all-purpose academic discussants) gather to exchange obfuscatory papers, carouse, and generally free-load, prior to the publication of yet another vapid, unread symposium. But it wasn't at all like that.

In the first place, most of the papers were accessible to the intelligent layman: jargon and obscurity are no longer the badges of respectability. More important, the discussions, under the auspices of the *Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*, were astonishingly frank.

I say "astonishingly" because no fewer than six of the nineteen participants were academics from Poland and Hungary. All spoke openly of the problems they faced back home—not

After 25 Years. . . .



A REVIEW **which, like** ENCOUNTER, **is committed to a belief that a free exchange and discussion of ideas is an essential feature of any civilised society has to recognise that, as things are today, it operates under conditions which are not favourable to its success. Some of those conditions are, from the point of view of Western society, external ones. They arise in general out of the existence, in the Soviet Union and its satellites, of an alternative society and ideology which, by its own standards, the West cannot hesitate to characterise as barbarian, both in the sense that they are hostile and alien, and in the sense that they lack those minimum guarantees of individual freedom and security in the absence of which no society can claim to be civilised.**

ENCOUNTER *was in fact founded, twenty-five years ago, as a result of a growing realisation, on the part of many people, that this alternative society constituted a challenge in face of which the liberal intellectual tradition of the West was in danger of going by default, simply because the means did not exist by which anyone could speak for it. It was precisely in order to provide such a voice that* ENCOUNTER, *together with "Der Monat" in Germany, "Preuves" in France, "Tempo Presente" in Italy, entered on publication. Such a venture would not have been possible at all at that time without the generous assistance and support of the United States, and there are some who have for that reason claimed that* ENCOUNTER*'s pretensions to unrestricted freedom in its choice of subject matter and contributors were vitiated by its very origins. To believe this would be as absurd as to deplore the post-War reconstruction and recovery of Europe because the original initiative towards it came from the great Secretary of State and of the Army, General George Marshall.*

OF THE FOUR **magazines which joined in the original venture, only** ENCOUNTER **is still in being and this year has been able to celebrate its twenty-fifth birthday. Some might conclude from this that the purpose for which they were founded has already been sufficiently achieved and that** ENCOUNTER **survives only as a ghost of forgotten intellectual battles. Others would say, with more justification, that when the casualties have been so heavy it is all the more important that** ENCOUNTER **should survive to carry on their work.**

THERE IS ALL THE MORE REASON *for thinking this because the dangers to genuinely independent and unrestricted intellectual discussion are, in Western society, not merely external but internal. There is the belief that intellectual discussion, and indeed any form of disinterested intellectual activity, is a kind of harmless game for a frivolous minority, who can be safely allowed to indulge themselves in it as they wish because they are not likely to make any effective use of this freedom. There is the growing specialisation in all fields of knowledge which threatens to make discussion of them the monopoly of a privileged academic class and not, as it should be, a distinctive feature of a healthy democratic society. There is a kind of crisis of intellectual confidence, which tempts many young people (and indeed many of their teachers) to believe that they must look elsewhere than to the West for their salvation.*

IT IS PERHAPS SUFFICIENT **to say that** ENCOUNTER **stands at the opposite extreme from all three of these standpoints. It would claim that the disinterested and unfettered discussion of ideas is not a frivolous diversion but an essential ingredient of any civilised society. It would claim that the specialisation of knowledge is a threat to us all unless there exist organs of intellectual discussion in which its results can be made available to those who are not specialists, in which specialisation can itself be exposed to criticism and be called to account when it tends to make knowledge the possession of a few and not of the many; and in which some attempt is made to contribute to the unity of a culture which threatens to fall apart as a result of its own divisive and fissiparous tendencies. And finally, it would claim that for Western man there is no alternative but to pursue even further the road of rational inquiry and discussion which first made him aware of his own potentialities. It is possible that for others there may be different roads to freedom and to knowledge. But Western man is committed to the only one whose secret has as yet been revealed to him.**

HOW FAR ENCOUNTER *has been able to justify these claims in its own columns is of course for others, and particularly its own readers, to decide; but perhaps it is fair to say that it is with reference to them that the magazine would wish the first twenty-five years of its life to be judged, and would hope to base its continued existence.*

Goronwy Rees

From his essay "On Intellectual Reviews", in the 25th Anniversary number of ENCOUNTER, *October 1978.*

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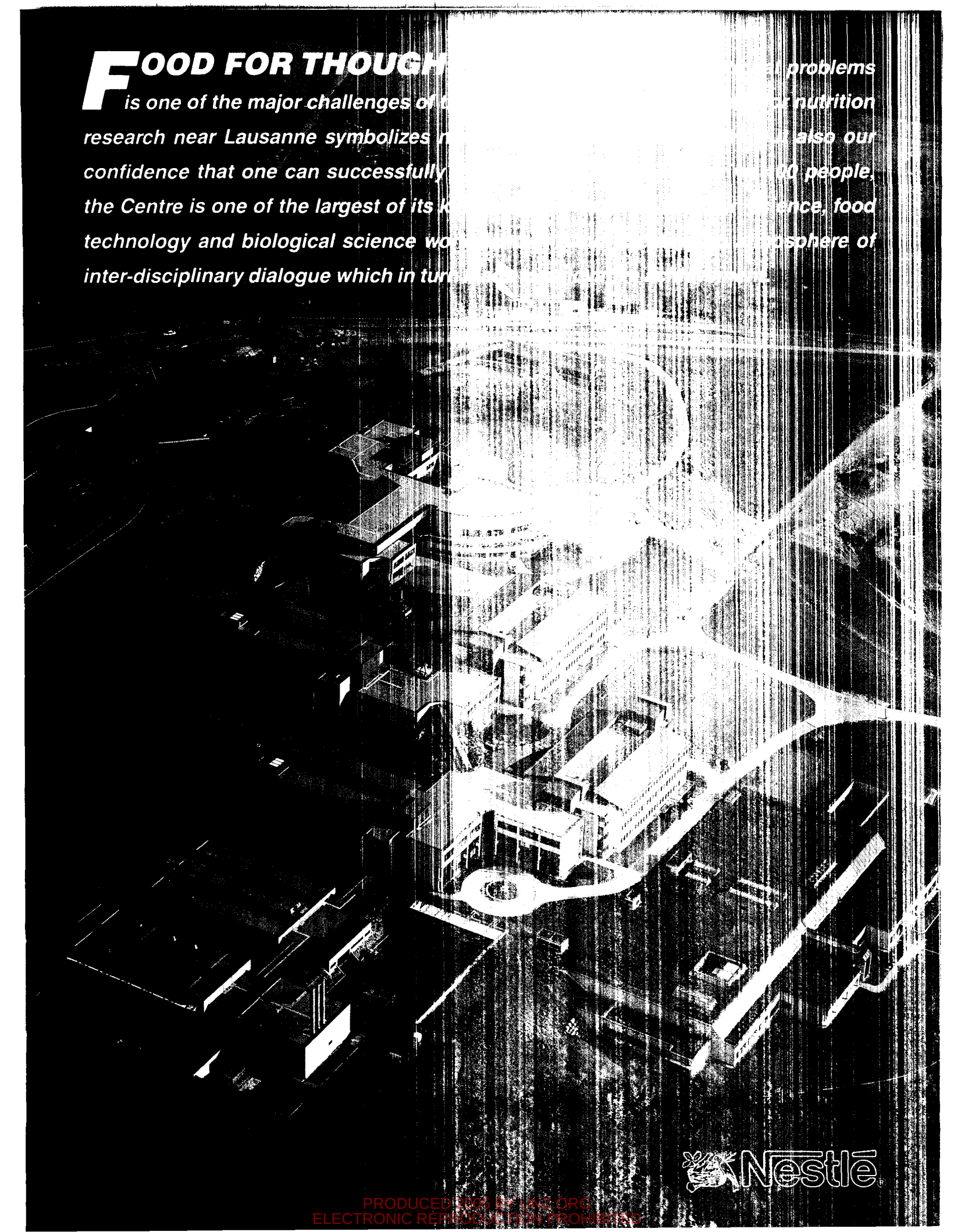

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only in the private, extra-curricular meetings over a glass or a sandwich, but in the formal plenary sessions of the conference itself. At one point, I even found myself trying to explain the idealistic folly and ignorance of some 1930s British Soviet-watchers—against impassioned anti-Stalinist condemnation by a Marxist professor from Budapest: a case of role-reversal through 180 degrees.

A common culture? Hardly: but, as one participant told me, Poles and Hungarians seemed to feel more at ease in a neutral country like Austria than they might in, say, Federal Germany. Although *glasnost* and *perestroika* may also have encouraged candour, I recognised a genuine difference from similar past discussions in Sofia, Hamburg and London. Perhaps Vienna does have a special atmosphere, after all.

To me, revisiting Austria for the first time in 38 years, it was doubly redolent of the past. Unlike Berlin, Vienna escaped wholesale destruction and rebuilding. Some of its large town houses seem to have acquired new office windows, presumably to accommodate extra storeys with lower ceilings; but the roofs and the rusticated ground floors are still intact. Elsewhere, despite intrusive pedestrian precincts, much of the Habsburg look of the place remains the same. I was reminded of pre-War Germany; and I wondered why so few film directors or set-designers seem to use the city for period films. Touched by the south and by Romance filigree, yet grey and solid and northern all the same, Vienna for me resembles its language—German, but with extra warmth and softness, Munich on a meringue.

I WAS ALSO REMINDED OF Luxembourg, where I lived for two-and-a-half years. Here, the link is the lack of a coastline. Most British people, I suspect, feel very slightly uneasy in landlocked countries—hemmed in, earthbound, vaguely at a loss. In the American Middle West, meeting people who've never seen "the ocean", it's hard to suppress a blend of incredulity and (almost) condescension, as who might say "You poor thing—cooped up all your life!" The seaside is so much a part of our culture that innumerable landlubbers migrate there on retirement, perhaps to fulfil some childhood fantasy of a perpetual holiday with bucket and spade. This too is a piquant contrast with countries like Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, whose inhabitants presumably dream of the hills or the lakes.

But dreaming, in any case, is more to the point in Britain now than actually visiting some of our fabled shores. Greenpeace, of *Rainbow Warrior* fame, recently published *Coastline*,[1] an admonitory survey of the British seaside, splendidly illustrated but with a horror story on almost every page. Untreated sewage—overdevelopment—eroding cliffs—oil-polluted beaches: these and many more threaten the coastline and its inhabitants, both natural and human. As in most matters of conservation, the main problem is people, destroying the object of their affection as Oscar Wilde said they would. Greed and easy access are a dreadful combination.

PERHAPS IT would be better, in fact, to visit our coastline from the sea. I know of few experiences more enticing. First a grey mist on the far horizon, gradually solidifying: land—but where? A check on the chart and the log, then the pilot book. Is that the "Tower (conspic.)"? Or "Steeple"? Or "Chimney"? Are we on the transit line yet? Where are the leading marks? Then, slowly, the picture comes closer. Shapes turn into buildings; headlands emerge from cliffs. The sea changes colour. A bell-buoy clangs. At last, looking tiny, there's the harbour entrance, with a big ship coming out. Slow the engine, wait, rock to and fro in the wash. Move on now past slimy piles and harbour walls dark with seaweed. Find a berth; tie up; lock the washboard; go ashore into a grimy, diesel-polluted dead end of town. From there, the land is suddenly El Dorado, swaying slightly underfoot, but promising fresh food, and ease, and showers, and shops, and countryside—a green paradise after so much cold, wet grey-blue.

A few years ago, Jonathan Raban drove a motor-boat down the Mississippi from Minneapolis to New Orleans, and wrote a dazzling book about it, *Old Glory*.[2] Some critics detected in his narrative a formal epic Quest; but I was content to treat it as a vivid and thoughtful account of American life as approached from the river, often through just such sleazy wharfs and industrial ports as one encounters from the sea. I read the book, in fact, while sailing in the Aegean, and was often more gripped by it than by Greece. Not long afterwards, Raban undertook a similar voyage round Britain, this time in a sail-boat. The result, just paperbacked, was *Coasting*.[3]

After *Old Glory*, some British reviewers seem to have found *Coasting* tame. Britain, of course, is less foreign to them—and to Raban—than the States bordering the Mississippi. True, there's less zing and sparkle in the experience; but the voyage and the story-telling seem to me almost as absorbing as before. To anyone who enjoys boats, in particular, it's hugely refreshing to read a sailor who can also write. I know of only two others who even approach Raban's skill.

SO PERHAPS the time has come to return to the opening quotation. In the original ENCOUNTER article, it was prefaced by another sentence: "Modern writing is afflicted by a pathological anxiety about the problem of ownership." But Jonathan Raban—its author—need no longer worry. In the marina of letters, he has already booked his pontoon.

M

[1] *Coastline*. By KATE BAILLIE *et al*. Kingfisher Books (Elsey House, 24-30 Great Titchfield Street, London W1P 7AD), £14.95.

[2] *Old Glory*. By JONATHAN RABAN. Collins, £9.95; Flamingo, £2.95.

[3] *Coasting*. By JONATHAN RABAN. Collins Harvill, £10.95; Picador, £3.95.

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Politics & the Devil

By Leszek Kolakowski

According to traditional Christian teaching, the devil is incapable of creating. Whatever is created, having been created by God, is unqualifiedly, unrestrictedly, good; the whole of Nature, God's diffusion, is good by definition, whereas ill will, diabolic or human, is pure negativity. Consequently the devil, in order to carry out his work of destruction, is bound to exploit divinely supplied material and to foil its proper use. His evil activity is entirely parasitic upon the excellence of the Creation.

In human affairs this perversion consisted mainly in the devil's capacity—catching hold, of course, of the wickedness we all share as a result of original sin—to tempt us to see relative goods as goods in themselves, to worship certain secondary goods as though they deserved divine reverence, thus substituting creatures for the Creator. This is, in fact, in what most of our sins consist. Our natural drives, instincts, and desires are good as such; and their use is legitimate to the extent that they ultimately direct themselves to God as the highest good, instead of being used for their own sake. Our physical and mental needs and wants merit satisfaction only if we bear in mind that God is their ultimate goal. Knowledge is laudable and desirable if we employ our reason to fathom the mysteries of nature with the purpose of knowing better the divine order and thereby the author of this order. The pleasures of life are worthy in so far as they serve life and we realise that life is there to sing the glory of the Lord. We love other people properly when we love God through them.

This applies to political affairs no less than to all the others. To the extent that politics is the sheer struggle for power, it is by definition, in Christian terms, bound to be the realm of the devil. It then simply releases our *libido dominandi* as a drive that expands, as it were, for the sake of its own expansion and has no objectives beyond itself. Domination of nature was a biblical privilege of man; so is the necessity of political order, to assure peace and justice on earth as a way of serving God and of fulfilling his designs. Not unlike in all other areas of human life, however, the devil distorts and poisons the good natural order. Once political goods acquire autonomy and become ends in themselves, they are at the service of the devil.

Thomas Aquinas built the most admirable, all-embracing conceptual order which, without dismissing or despising instrumental goods, relative values, and secondary causes, and thus without encouraging a theocratic temptation, found a proper and legitimate place for all kinds of human activity—cognitive, political, artistic or technical. This order was overarched by the divine wisdom and goodness, toward which everything naturally tends as the final goal. There was no place in this order for any sharp distinction between a law in the purely normative sense and a law as a natural regularity, between the rules concerning good and evil and the rules which govern the natural succession of events.

Both kinds of rules derived their validity from the infallible verdicts of a Being in which wisdom and goodness coincide. Even though we can, to be sure, violate in our acts the rules of good and evil, which we cannot do in the case of natural regularities, in neither case is the validity of the law broken. We are punished by the natural order if we try to forget its laws; and we are punished by God if we breach the Commandments. Natural law has no validity in itself, it derives from eternal law: it is the way in which eternal law operates in rational creatures—*lex est aliquid rationis*, as Thomas Aquinas says,[1] anticipating Kant; it cannot be abrogated by "the human heart".

This elegant order, in which all areas of human life, including politics, had their proper place in the universal

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[1] *Summa Theologiae*, 1a 2ae, Qu. XCI, art. ii, Qu. XCIV.

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hierarchy, has crumbled irreversibly (or so it seems), and we may reflect for a while on the metaphysical meaning of this collapse.

The entire development of modernity, starting with its late medieval roots, may be seen as a gradual movement whereby politics, arts, science and philosophy asserted, step by step, their autonomous status and independence from divine and ecclesiastical supervision. Each of them had to seek its own criteria of validity, instead of inferring them from biblical tradition and from the teachings of the Church. It could no longer be obvious where this normative foundation was to be discovered, and how an area of thinking and of acting could produce *ex nihilo* its own principles without making them simply a matter of arbitrary choice or of caprice, ending with the idea that no such principles are available.

This last stage of nihilistic liberation was eventually to be achieved in art, less so in philosophy, and not at all in the sciences, while in political doctrines it has never been accepted unambiguously and universally, even though the Machiavellian and Hobbesian analyses came close to this result.

One would expect, in conformity with Christian (and, in particular, Augustinian) teaching, that any area of life, if it achieves independence and itself issues all verdicts about what is good, valid, excellent or proper in it, will fall under the sway of the devil. Those verdicts—one could argue—then become a matter of human free choice: and human choice, uninformed by grace, naturally opts for evil. Whether in making that choice we surrender to actual diabolic temptation or to our own rotten nature, the result will inevitably invigorate the infernal forces.

If art, instead of being edifying and initiating people into Christian truth, becomes a matter of sheer amusement, of formal experiments, of unrestricted personal expression, or of flattering the impure tastes of the public, it does not merely become morally indifferent; it is bound to promote sin.

If secular knowledge, instead of trying to disclose in the world the wisdom of the Creator, disregards revealed truth, and works for the satisfaction of human curiosity, it is fated to become an instrument of godlessness. Indeed, St Bernard in his treatise on the degrees of *hybris* lists curiosity among the manifestations of this horrible sin,[2] and the same tenet has been repeated time and again in devotional literature.

As to the evil of secular politics, it is so obvious and so glaring in terms of traditional Christian wisdom that there is no need to dwell on the subject. If political affairs have no foundation in natural law, which in turn derives from divine legislation, it seems self-evident that there is absolutely no reason why justice (whatever this means) rather than injustice should be praised; and the human city is left with no ground except the unbridled movement of blind passions, warring against each other.

Peace could then be no more than a temporary equilibrium of mechanical forces, and justice would be reduced to never-ending attempts, by one of the struggling sides, to extort concessions from the other. Political thinkers, having discarded the Gospels, might still, no doubt, have recourse to their Aristotle—as, in fact, they did. But Aristotle, much as he was venerated by many philosophers, both Christian and non-Christian, had no divine authority, and was by no means infallible; his advice could be shrugged off by anybody with impunity.

That this was actually the standard way of thinking in the Church's teaching we can easily see from innumerable official and semi-official documents and from the large body of Christian literature devoted to the subject. It might be argued that Hobbes's philosophy was a kind of triumph of Christianity. It vindicated the idea that all normative principles of politics, once they have been cut off from their religious foundation, are bound to disappear, and that the entire fabric of society will be based on sheer distribution of forces, ruled by fear, greed, and thirst for power, simply because this is how the world is arranged.

If the supremacy of the divine law in all realms of human life, including politics, is indeed an irremovable part of Christian teaching; if no political order can enjoy legitimacy unless it is explicitly a fragment of the all-encompassing divine order; if social life, deprived of this legitimacy, unavoidably slides down into the clutches of Satan—should we not suppose that the Church may not without inconsistency renounce its claims to supremacy over the civil authorities, indeed that it ought, conforming to its own doctrine, to strive after theocracy, lest it surrender to the prince of this world?

And if so, how are we to see all the recent pronouncements of the Church and the Popes, especially since the Second Vatican Council, clearly renouncing theocratic pretensions, accepting the autonomy of science, and so on? Are these not just concessions, made under duress, to the spirit of the age, to modernity? And are they not at odds with the entire tradition of Christianity?

To be sure, some theorists of natural law, among deists and atheists in the 17th and 18th centuries, argued that we can come to know natural law directly, as a matter of innate insight, without the support of revelation. We simply instinctively know what is wrong or right, just or unjust, since nature has inscribed this kind of intuition in our minds. This amounted to saying that the presence of God and His legislation are irrelevant to principles of justice; those principles stand on their own feet, whether or not the supreme Legislator exists.

This belief, however, was naturally eroded both by the simplest sceptical arguments and by the fact—which became more obvious the more people knew about other civilisations—that the notions of natural justice and natural law are by no means historically or geographically universal; and, therefore, we cannot rely on their being immutably engraved on the human heart.

And indeed, since the struggle of kings and princes against

[2] "De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae", Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 182, pp.941-977.

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papal authority was not only expressed in practical political measures but found a theoretical foundation as well, one could see among the defenders of secular politics and of the autonomy of civil authorities a certain uneasiness about a political order that had been robbed of its celestial legitimacy.

These misgivings are expressed in the view that it is proper and useful for political rulers who do not believe in God and in an afterlife to employ religious imagery, rites, clergy and divine sanctions in promoting their interests and assuring social order. Marsilius of Padua made this point quite clearly; and Machiavelli, of course, more emphatically.[3] So did Hobbes and—less explicitly but unmistakably—Spinoza, who averred in addition that one should govern people in such a way that it *seemed* to them that they governed themselves. Even Montesquieu says, through the mouth of his Usbek, that if justice depended on human conventions one should conceal this horrible truth even from oneself.[4]

The reason for this fraudulent use of religion for political purposes was simply that most people are either stupid or wicked, or both; without the horror of hell their blind passions, continually threatening the social order, could not be tamed. While God was supposed to be the supreme judge, the devil as the executor of His verdicts seemed to be more powerful in affecting the human imagination. Political theorists who preached this approach therefore worked on the assumption that if there were no devil, one ought to invent him.

Although those completely "secularised" teachers unwillingly confirmed the traditional Christian tenet that politics cannot dispense with religious justification, this did not mean that the priest or the pope should control the emperor or the prince; on the contrary, the prince should hire a priest to serve him. It was thus admitted that sound political order needed divine protection—if not real, then imaginary—and a kind of perverse theocracy (though not a clerocracy) seemed to be encouraged even by implacable Church-haters.

2.

THERE IS, HOWEVER, another side to the story. The devil tries—often successfully—to convert good into evil; but God is not idle, He knows how to outwit His foe and to reforge evil, havoc, and destruction into instruments of His own designs. The devil might have managed to tear asunder the healthy arrangements which had kept politics in its proper subordinate place and had made the power of the emperor void unless sanctified by the pope. He might have offered independence and the right to self-determination to the realm of politics as well as to art, science and philosophy—or, at least, taken profit from their independence. But this fragmented world has never slipped out of divine control; and from the disorder a new order emerged which was to defeat the satanic plot and start a new bout of wrestling.

To understand God's way of proceeding we have to keep in mind the reasons why He cannot simply command the devil to evaporate, or shackle him and make him harmless. The answer that Christian theodicy has been repeating for centuries was that reason and the ability to do evil (i.e. freedom) are inseparable; consequently, God, by producing rational creatures—human and angelic—had to suffer the inevitable evil results.

This kernel of theodicy was well shaped in early Christian thinking. Virtually the whole of it is included in St Basil the Great's remark in a homily, that to blame the Creator for not having made us incapable of sinning amounts to preferring an irrational and passive nature to one that is rational, active, and free.[5] Origen, who made a similar point earlier, avers that if human beings are weak, if they have to suffer and toil in order to survive, this is because God wanted them to exercise their ingenuity, skills, and intelligence; and this would not have been possible if they had enjoyed an idle life amid abundance.[6] Briefly, if the suffering which Nature inflicts on the human race is a condition of progress, the suffering which people inflict on each other results from their ability to do evil; and this ability is an unavoidable part of their being free, and thus capable of doing good as well.

The main point of Christian theodicy boils down to just that: God's creation is an act of love, and the mutual love between the Maker and His creatures is conceivable only if the latter are beings endowed with reason, who can do good of their own will. Compulsory good acts are not good at all in a moral sense, and the ability willingly to do good implies the ability to do evil. The loving Creator is consequently only conceivable on a condition of evil: without it the Creation would be pointless. It is implicitly admitted even in the earliest theodicies that God, bound by the standards of logical consistency, is unable to produce self-contradictory worlds.

It is, therefore, as a result of logical necessity that the course of world affairs is a continuous game in which good and evil attempt to outsmart each other. It is, of course, a matter for revelation to promise that the game is going to end with the ultimate victory of good.

3.

EVEN IF WE ASSUME that it was the devil who, through his patient and painful work, robbed the Church of its worldly power and eventually made politics—both as a practical activity and as a theoretical effort—independent from religious bodies and doctrines, at least in Western civilisation, it is natural to reflect on God's counter-moves. But it is far from obvious that this process of "autonomisation" was initiated by the devil alone.

[3] *Defensor of Peace*, I, 5, II; *Discourses*, I, 11-15.
[4] *Lettres Persanes*, LXXXIII.
[5] Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 31, p.346.
[6] *Contra Celsum*, IV, 76.

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It is beyond doubt that the development whereby politics, science, art, philosophy and technology gained independence —and had to build their own foundation, rather than taking it ready-made from the religious legacy—was the absolute condition of all the successes and failures of modernity. To break out of the tutelage of religion was indispensable for the further expansion of mankind's potential. This story may, therefore, be seen in Christian terms as a new *felix culpa*, a simulation of the original sin. Had it not occurred, the first couple would have been stuck in hopeless stagnation, producing a race without history and without creativity.

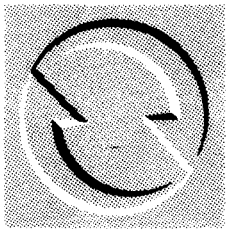
While the Enlightenment granted autonomy to all fields of human activity, it could not prevent evil from sneaking into them. Being independent, however, they inevitably conflicted with each other, whereby a kind of metaphysical checks-and-balances system was produced. Religion is no longer trying (in Western civilisation) to impose its rule on science, art and politics. As a result, the devils dispatched to those particular areas of life cannot cooperate smoothly; they weaken one another's work.

At first glance politics seems obviously to be the favourite hunting-ground (next to sex) of the devil, as it is directly responsible for wars, persecutions, and all the imaginable and unimaginable atrocities which the struggle for power brings about. But in the historical process we are never sure where remote responsibility lies. Art, science, and philosophy look innocuous by comparison, but their innocence might be deceptive since they operate on a much larger time-scale and their evil results are for this reason usually diluted, difficult to trace, uncertain, and elusive. The demons from the department of politics can be simpletons or novices, whereas those who operate in the arts, philosophy, and science must be much wiser, subtler, more far-sighted. The evil produced by tyrants and conquerors is intentional, easily identifiable, and in part even calculable. But who can identify and calculate the evil which resulted (unintentionally) over centuries from the minds of great philosophers and artists, from the creative toil of Plato, Copernicus, Descartes, Rousseau, Wagner? What a craftsman it takes subtly to poison the fruits of all noble and clever benefactors of mankind, to foresee and control the changes in human mentality their work would effect, and to exploit those changes for the profit of hell!

4.

THIS DESCRIPTION might suggest that a drive toward theocracy is somehow naturally built into the spiritual framework of Christianity, and that it was the diabolic forces that eventually were to foil it. This is by no means certain, or even likely.

Despite everthing we know about the Church's claims to temporal power, Christianity has never been theocratic in a strong sense. The Church of the martyrs certainly was not. Christians naturally tended to see themselves as an alien



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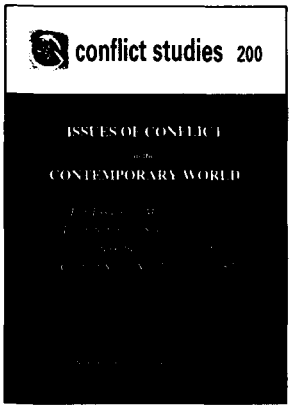

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enclave in the pagan world, and the secular authorities as their natural enemies. But even the triumphant Church at the peak of its temporal might cannot properly be called theocratic.

To be sure, the famous official document which comes the closest to theocratic pretensions and is routinely quoted in this sense—the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Bonifatius VIII (1302)—states clearly that the physical sword is to be subordinated to the spiritual sword; that earthly powers, if they deviate from good, should be judged by the Church, and churchmen by their own superiors; that all human creatures are subject to the pope as a matter of salvation. The doctrinal basis of those claims is the unrestricted capacity of the Church to define what is sin and what is virtue. In all matters involving sin and requiring its suppression—by the sword if necessary—the civil authorities were duty bound to be at the service of the Church. In practice, the extent of real papal claims depended on contingent historical circumstances; what was actually meant to fall under the heading of "spiritual matters" could never be unambiguous, since most human activities, potentially at least, have a moral aspect. The two sayings—"The Church has no power in secular matters" and "The Church has power in spiritual matters"—seem to be logically compatible or complimentary. But because there are various ways in which to separate those two areas, we know that they do in practice clash with one another. Those who use the former phrase want to restrict or even abolish ecclesiastical power, whereas adherents of the latter want to enlarge it. In theoretical terms, everything depends on the criterion whereby the temporal is distinguished from the spiritual. Yet on the assumption that our conduct in temporal affairs is always relevant, in one way or another, to our salvation, the theocratic claims seem to be vindicated.

In fact, it is plausible to argue not only that they are not, but that semi-theocratic aspirations were brought into Christianity as a result of diabolic sophistry. Even the most far-reaching claims to secular power—whether in theoretical statements like *Unam Sanctam* and the writings of Aegidius Romanus, or in the practical policy of the Papacy, say, in the times of Innocent III—were not, strictly speaking, theocratic. They never aimed at the replacement of royal, princely, or judicial authorities by the direct rule of the clergy, or tried to abolish the distinction between the two kinds of power.

THE MOST FREQUENTLY QUOTED scriptural basis for the division of power was, of course, Jesus's saying "Render unto Caesar . . ." (*Matthew*, 22, 15-22; *Mark*, 12, 13-17). We learn from the Gospel that this was the way in which Jesus evaded the trap laid by the Pharisees. What the trap was is easy to see. Had Jesus said "No, you must not pay taxes", he would have denounced himself openly as a political rebel. Had he said instead, "Yes, pay taxes", he would have become a loyalist or a collaborator. His answer, therefore, was bound to be ambiguous. To read into it a general theory of two independent, or partially independent, legitimate sources of power was an extremely inflated and distorted exegesis. Still, Jesus's saying is quite in keeping with his teaching if it means: Give to Caesar the earthly goods he desires: his power is short-lived anyway in the face of the imminent descent of

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God's kingdom; Caesar is not important; his glory will soon evaporate without trace. The oncoming Apocalypse is the never-fading framework of Jesus's preaching.

Thus Jesus provided his disciples with neither theocratic aspirations nor a clear theory of the double source of authority, however defined. He preached moral rules that were universally valid. It was, therefore, natural that his successors were supposed to pronounce moral judgment on all matters in all areas of life, including politics, wars, sex, trade, and labour. Their task was to say what is good or evil. There is no basis in Jesus's teaching on which they might demand instruments of coercion or violence in order to implement—directly or indirectly—their teacher's rules. Indeed, the morally good act performed under physical coercion is an obvious contradiction in terms.

5.

THE DEVIL never sleeps, but neither does God. The general history of their struggle in the area under scrutiny may be depicted as follows. The devil instigated the persecution of Christianity, but this direct assault proved to be counter-productive. The blood of martyrs, in accordance with prediction, fertilised the soil on which the Church was to flourish. Once Christianity emerged as victor, the devil decided to spoil it by the glory of secular power and the temptation of evangelising the world by the sword: he convinced the Church that it ought to dominate political institutions. Since God alone is to be worshipped and the sin of worshipping anything else has to be extirpated, argued the devil, political activity cannot have its own goals but must take them from the Church and bow before its verdicts. This was a misleading *non sequitur* which the devil, we must admit, installed into Christianity with tremendous efficacy. However, success was not perfect; Christianity had certain built-in barriers which prevented it from demanding a full-fledged theocracy. One of those barriers was that wrong interpretation of Jesus's reflections on a Roman coin, which suggested that secular politics has legitimate rights in its own domain and thus an extent of autonomy. (The interpretation which I believe is the more plausible would have been a stronger barrier, but the prevailing one also worked.)

Another barrier against the devilish fraud was Christianity's strong belief in the devil, in evil, and in original sin. Theocracy is a Christian, or rather pseudo-Christian Utopia, a dream about the perfect world, built on earth under the Church's control and designed to destroy sin, or at least "external" sinfulness. The legacy of both the Gospels and the Church of the martyrs was there to resist the Utopian delusion. It suggested that the blood of martyrs would be shed, here or there, until the end of time, and that evil—opposed in no matter what way—cannot be abrogated. An earthly paradise—moral or material—before the Second Coming is a superstitious product of human self-conceit.

The theocratic dream includes, implicitly or explicitly, a vision of mankind that has done away with contingency, hazard, and also with freedom—a stagnant perfection in which people would be robbed of the opportunity to sin, and thus of liberty: both are inseparable in Christian teaching. The relative autonomy of politics has to be accepted as part of unavoidable human imperfection; an attempt to abolish it forcibly would produce incomparably more evil. The Church as *corpus mysticum* might be infallible but every individual churchman is fallible and sinful, and so is the Church as a sub-lunar organism. The concentration of all power in its hands would spell disaster both to human advancement and to Christianity itself. The devil knew that, of course. After all, his first venture in the Christian era, around 30 A.D., was the temptation of Jesus with the prospect of earthly splendour and kinghood. Jesus did not surrender, but most men no doubt would.

Nevertheless, the drive toward theocracy was strong, if never complete. It was rooted not in doctrine or in a wrong reading of the Gospel but in the very fact of secular power in the hands of the Church—a result of a number of historical accidents.

6.

AND SO TO THE THIRD phase of the battle. It was to unseal new avenues for further human development—consisting in the progressing dispersion of power, and giving more and more independence to politics and to other fields on to which human energy could expand. This was to be a dangerous game. God employed the tactics which, as we know from the Old Testament, had been tested many times when He scourged His people with disasters and wars brought on by its—and His—enemies. In the course of our modernity He apparently had no other choice—granted that He refused, as He consistently had done, to correct the human race by taking away its freedom. Once more, He had to visit our iniquities by employing for the job His own foes: that is to say, the Enlightenment.

The task of the Enlightenment, among others, was to free politics from the fetters of religion. Since religion, by assuming so many political responsibilities and so much power, had become more and more contaminated with secular interests, more and more involved in military adventures, in diplomatic intrigues, and in amassing wealth for wealth's sake, the other part of the same assignment was to purify Christianity itself and to reduce it to what was its proper business. This part was to be given to the Reform movement within the Church. Again, two sides of the same Roman coin.

The devil, as one would expect, operated relentlessly on

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both sides of the fence, and quite successfully. Within the Enlightenment proper, his idea was to convince people that it was not enough to liberate politics from religious control and to sever the state from the Church. The progress of humanity consisted in forgetting its religious tradition altogether and, if necessary, doing so by violence. He gave the Enlightenment an anti-Christian shape and devised, with the help of many fine and virtuous minds, the idea of a humanism which defined itself primarily by godlessness. He thereby opened the door to the concept of politics as sheer vying for power—power being the supreme good in itself. This went far beyond the Aristotelian tradition.

This was the easier and not very complicated half of the devil's job. Properly to wreck and to exploit the ideal of Christianity, which would rid itself of secular pollution and return to its original purity, was a much harder task. The devil proved to be up to the challenge.

This yearning after the innocence of the apostolic faith, the unspoiled beginning of the New Time, was the most powerful ideological message of medieval popular heresies up to, and including, the great Reformation. And the destiny of the Reformation was to reveal how the devil had converted to his use the seemingly unassailable slogans of the poor Church, the Church that lays no claim to worldly power and glory.

This happened within a few years after Luther's glamorous entrée into European history. Since what Christianity is about is the salvation of the individual soul, and since, according to Luther, salvation is a matter of faith which is God's gift, and since neither a priest nor the Pope or the Church as a whole has the power of forgiving our sins—and whatever is done by us without faith is a sin—the natural conclusion seemed to be that the visible Church had no work to do, and would better be abrogated.

VARIOUS radicals of the Reformation indeed drew this conclusion and blamed Luther, who failed to do so, for his inconsistency. At the outset, Luther thought only about mending the conscience of Christian people and seemed to assume that the world, hopelessly corrupted and ruled by Satan, did not lend itself to reform. Once he had decided to reform it none the less, he was compelled to make compromises. No material is perfectly malleable, and if we want to mould it in conformance to our vision we have to take into account its immutable qualities, i.e., renounce the ideal shape and think of a possible one, searching for a compromise between the dreamed-of product and the actual stuff we work on. We have to give up the radical dichotomy "everything or nothing" and try to improve the world, thus implicitly admitting that it can be improved and is not, after all, incurably rotten. Still, while the Lutheran reform accepted the necessity of the visible Church, it broke its divinely protected continuity by doing away with the sacrament of priesthood and with the apostolic succession; the Church became a branch of secular life. The conclusion was that the Church had to be subordinated to the secular authorities. And this is what was eventually to happen.

This was an impressive triumph for the devil. Starting with attacks on the adulteration of Christianity by earthly passions and interests, and on the secular power of the Church, the Reformation ended up with the idea which perversely turned theocracy upside down: it made of the Church a maidservant of the secular authorities.

NOR WAS THIS ALL. The Church was supposed to be nationalised (this means secularised, or devastated), and as the reverse side of that coin the secular authorities were sanctified and had bestowed on them a divine dignity. This hallowing of secular power encompassed all its facets (as we can see from Luther's famous tract on civil authority in 1523). The state obviously needs not only artisans and peasants but judges, executioners and soldiers as well, and therefore there is as little wrong in being a hangman as in being a cobbler. With impeccable consistency, Luther argues that if Jesus Christ was not a cobbler or a hangman, this was only because he was so busy with other things. In other words: one may well imagine Jesus Christ being a hangman. (His earthly father was a carpenter and it is quite plausible to think that Jesus, before he embarked on his mission in Galilee, had been a carpenter as well. This is a perfectly respectable job, so why not a hangman? . . .)

There was more. The Reformation not only secularised Christianity as an institution, it secularised it as a doctrine as

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well, which amounted to stabbing itself in its own heart since no greater abomination could have been imagined by its founders. Here the devil's performance was indeed spectacular. This is how he proceeded.

IN ORDER TO RESTORE the pristine purity of Christian life, the Reformation rejected outright the tradition which had been encapsulated in the dogmatic pronouncements of the Popes and Councils as a separate source of authority, next to the Bible. The Scriptures were now supposed to be the only norm of faith. But then there arose the question of who was authorised to interpret the Scriptures. In principle everyone, if he listened to the voice of the Holy Ghost, was capable of doing that. But then the Church, as an organised community, simply could not exist—since everybody, including heretics or the devil-possessed, would lay claim to special revelation or inspiration, and no binding canon could be enacted. The exegetes, therefore, finding no support in the historically formed, continuous eccclesiastical authority, had no instrument in interpreting Holy Writ but their own reason, which was otherwise condemned, declared corrupt, and dominated by the devil.

As a result, in glaring opposition to its original intention, the Reformation produced the horrific idea of rational religion. It was to become a hotbed of deism and rationalism. Bossuet in his *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes* (1688), the masterpiece of Counter-Reformation literature, grasped the issue with a laudable clarity:

> "The true tribunal, one says, is the conscience wherein everybody ought to judge matters and listen to the truth. This is easy to say. Melanchthon said this, as others did; but he felt in his conscience that another principle was needed to build the Church. . . . Should one leave the door open to anybody who pretended to be a messenger of God? . . . Whatever one does, one has to go back to the authority which is never assured or legitimate unless it comes from above and is not self-established. . . .
>
> If [Melanchthon] had properly understood this, he would never have imagined that truth could be separated from that body in which the succession and rightful authority were laid. . . .
>
> The cause of the changes we have seen in the separated bodies consists in that they did not know the Church's authority, the promises it received from above; briefly, they did not 'know what the Church is'. . . [the heretics therefore] were thrown back upon human reasoning, upon their particular passions."[7]

In other words, the devil transubstantiated the Reformation into the Enlightenment: no mean achievement. God, in order to counteract the dangers of theocracy—i.e., the corruption of Christianity by the secular power (on the one hand), and the stifling of human creative potential (on the other)—had to loosen the relationship between religion and politics and grant the latter a certain (institutional, we may guess, not moral) autonomy. The devil caught hold of this process and deflected it in two directions which were eventually to converge. He favoured the nationalisation of religion. And he gave the Enlightenment a strongly anti-religious shape, thereby compelling politics to create its own rules *ex nihilo* and reducing it to sheer thirst for power.

7.

THE EFFECTS, though, were not quite satisfactory in the devil's eyes. In order to accomplish his purpose he had to promote freedom; and freedom is divine, however it may be exploited by the devil, and whatever Luther might have believed. Politics, once it had to rely on itself, was to abandon *truth* in favour of *consensus* as its foundation. This is indeed one of the cornerstones of democracy; consensus by no means implies that its participants are the blessed owners of the truth. The majority is to rule not because the majority is right, but only because it is the majority; nothing more is needed.

This was not what the devil intended. Despite what he presumably (and rationally) expected, politics, which had to build its own foundation instead of finding it in divine commandments, became less, not more, cruel. (Of course, the devil may have comforted himself with the idea that this unpleasant outcome resulted from the lingering energy of the religious legacy; I leave aside the question of whether or not this explanation holds good.) And the divine gift of freedom had more, not less, opportunity to expand and to assert itself.

The devil had to design a new counter-force, and he came up with the cleverest idea ever devised. This is the fourth phase of the contest, and it is being played out during our century for all of us to see.

The devil decided to return to the old notion of politics based on *truth*—as opposed to contract or consensus. He invented ideological states: that is to say, states whose legitimacy is grounded in the fact that their owners are the owners of truth. If you oppose such a state or its system, you are an enemy of truth. The father of the lie employed the idea of truth as his powerful weapon.

Truth by definition is universal, not tied to any particular nation or state. A nation or a state is not merely a nation or a state, trying to assert its particular interests, to defend itself, to expand, to conquer new territories, to build an empire, and so on. It is a carrier of universal truth, not unlike in the old days of the Crusades.

The devil, as the medieval theologians used to say, is *simia dei*, an ape of God. By inventing ideological states he produced a caricatural imitation of theocracy. In fact, the New

[7] *Oeuvres* (1816), vol. XIX, pp.296-97, 311-12; vol. XX, p.449.

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Order was to prove far more thorough and complete than any Christian state of old, for it dispensed with any distinction between secular and religious authorities, and instead concentrated spiritual and physical power in one place. The devil gave it not only the instruments of coercion and education but the entire wealth of the nation, and, indeed, the nation itself. Theocracy (or rather aleteiocracy, the rule of truth) had, at a certain moment, achieved an almost perfect form.

This changed, of course, the character of war. Since the Second World War, most wars have been about universal truth, that is to say, they became civil wars. As in a civil war, no rules of warfare operate. Prisoners are often slaughtered or compelled, under threat of death, to take the side of their former enemy—which is not a betrayal, as they simply abandon falsehood for truth, and to embrace truth is a conversion or enlightenment. The concept of betrayal has also changed; it can be applied only to those who renounce the side which is the vehicle of truth.

THE DEVIL seems to have succeeded admirably with his new invention, but there are signs that his triumph might be short-lived, for all the horror his new historical toy has caused. Ideological states did emerge, and many proved to be impressively resilient. But they have clearly reached the phase of decline. Ostensibly, they are still an embodiment of truth, which gives them the principle of legitimacy. But whenever they want their people to be motivated to do something, they appeal not to universal truth but to national sentiments, imperial glory, *raison d'état*, racial hatred (this is particularly glaring in Communist states). They do succeed to some extent, but these very successes reveal the grotesque gap between reality and its verbal disguise. That their truth is a fake has become irreversibly patent. Openly to admit that, however, would be disastrous. They attempt awkward, intermediary solutions, thus patching up the crises.

No doubt the devil has other resources. Apart from constructing towers of truth, he tries surreptitiously to reintroduce truth into democratic institutions as an alternative to contract and consensus. He takes up the principle of majority and distorts it by suggesting the attractive idea that the majority as such is right and therefore is entitled to do anything, including abolishing the very principle of majority. This constitutes, as we know, a real problem. Can a democratic constitution, by consent of the majority, vote itself out of existence? Can it be abrogated, that is to say commit suicide, in conformance with its own principles? (An analogous question: can a pope infallibly declare that he is not infallible?) A number of thinkers have reflected upon this problem, from Carl Schmitt (before he became a Nazi, that is) to James Buchanan. If the majority is right as such, this can easily happen, because minorities, being by definition vessels of falsehood, deserve to be destroyed.

I do not expect the devil to succeed in either of the two ways he has embarked upon in order to do away with freedom, i.e., to abolish human existence. People need mental security, no doubt; and this leaves them open to the devilish temptation of an ideocratic order. But they need to be human as well, and thus to use their freedom in questioning orders, in suspecting every truth, in venturing into uncharted realms of the spirit. The need for security is not specifically human; the need to take risks in exploring the unknown is. Clausewitz in his classic work makes this remark:

> "Although our intellect always feels itself urged toward clarity and certainty, still our mind often feels itself attracted by uncertainty . . . it prefers to remain in imagination in the realm of chance and luck. Instead of living yonder in poor necessity, it revels here in the wealth of possibilities; animated thereby, courage then takes wings to itself, and daring and danger make the element into which it launches itself as a fearless swimmer plunges into the stream. . . . There is therefore everywhere a margin for the accidental, and just as much in the greatest things as in the smallest. As there is room for this accidental on the one hand, so on the other there must be courage and self-reliance in proportion to the room available."[8]

Clausewitz knew very well what he was talking about. What applies to wars between states applies also to wars between good and evil in history. This war may never end, as the stuff we are made of feeds both sides. If the present phase closes with the devil's designs being frustrated, he will certainly be clever enough to open up new avenues for his energy. However, to speculate upon his future ingenuities would be futile.

THIS ENDLESS GAME is surely not a matter of intellectual delight. Indeed, St Augustine wrote in *The City of God* (XI, 18) that God

> "enriches the course of the world's history by the kind of antithesis which gives beauty to a poem. . . . in the composition of the world's history there is beauty arising from the antithesis of contraries—a kind of eloquence in events, instead of in words."

Hegel made a similar symphony of historical dialectics. After what we have been witnesses to in our century, we rather tend to think, with Kierkegaard, that to find this sort of aesthetic and intellectual delectation in the grandiose historical panorama is akin to enjoying the charm of music emitted by the bull of Phalaris. (According to the legend, the Sicilian tyrant Phalaris had a hollow brazen bull, in which his enemies were slowly roasted alive; the bull was so ingeniously constructed that the horrible howling of the victims emerged, through an acoustic device, as a pleasant melody.)

No, the struggle between the devil and God in history is not a merry spectacle. The only comfort we have derives from the simple fact that we are not passive observers or victims of this contest, but participants as well, and therefore our destiny is decided on the field on which we run and play. To say this is trivial, and, like many trivial truths, is well worth repeating.

[8] *On War* (1833), I, ch. 22.

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THEATRE

Plays for a Hard Country

By Edward Pearce

IT MIGHT BE instructive in the dog days of the theatrical season to give attention to three representative plays, one from the National Theatre, one from the Royal Shakespeare Company's repertory, and a piece from the commercial boulevard theatre.

The RSC, balanced between Stratford and the Barbican in London, has acquired one asset which remains absurdly underpublicised. The Swan Theatre, Stratford, opened in 1986. Although it is housed within brick walls (the shell of part of the original memorial theatre which escaped the fire of 1926), the Swan is a faithful facsimile of the famous "wooden O". Actually it is more like a rather arthritic oval, but who is measuring? The apron stage is surrounded on three sides, with the audience housed in the same mix of pit and galleries which served the Elizabethans. The best of it is that a home now exists for, and is devoted to the classical non-Shakespearian theatre. So far only Elizabethan and Jacobean plays have been staged, including Tourneur's *Revenger's Tragedy* and James Shirley's *Hyde Park*; but the intention is to cover a spectrum from 1570 to 1750, running roughly from Norton and Sackville to Colley Cibber—something which can only be a delight to aficionados. The rescue of the other Elizabethans and their successors preoccupied T. S. Eliot, and Havelock Ellis of the Mermaid editions. In any country except Britain (which delayed its National Theatre until the 1960s), such a repertory—from the University wits through the Revenge genre, the plays of humours, the Caroline decadence, the Restoration, to that little-explored thing, 18th-century comedy—would long ago have had a theatre to itself.

The production of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, under Barry Kyle's direction, is sensibly balanced between straight-faced orthodoxy and the need to accommodate the vaunting excess of Marlowe in all his primary colours without letting him spill into the risibility of yesterday's shocker. Barabas, the Jew of the title, is not subtle:

> *As for myself I walk abroad o'nights,*
> *And kill sick people groaning under walls;*
> *Sometimes I go about and poison wells. . . .*

There is a dash of Tom Lehrer about Barabas's nine-to-five steady villainy. *Poisoning Pigeons in the Park* has much the same ring. But the sail of his great verse is here as well: "men of judgment" should

> *. . . as their wealth increaseth, so enclose*
> *Infinite riches in a little room. . . .*

Or, as splendidly:

> *Thus like the sad presaging raven that tolls*
> *The sick man's passport in his hollow beak,*
> *And in the shadow of the silent night*
> *Doth shake contagion from her sable wings,*
> *Vexed and tormented runs poor Barabas*
> *With fatal curses toward these Christians. . . .*

Incidentally, whatever else this play may be, it isn't anti-Semitic. The villainy of Barabas, like the conquests of Tamburlaine, is something with which Marlowe exuberantly identifies. Every Marlowe hero, apart from poor Edward II, is a Nietzschean superman before his time; and Barabas, the overreaching capitalist glorying in his argosies, is no different. Marlowe was in thrall to the verbal equivalent of *fortissimo*. The piling-up of "opals, sapphires, amethysts, jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds, beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds" is a stimulant to life, like the conquest of continents or the cutting of throats.

The modern producer, tempted elsewhere to his own excesses, cannot parody what is already, half-intentionally, self-parody. He is obliged to add a measure of gravy browning. And the Kyle production, starting with a sleekly credible Machevil from John Carlisle, rolls with the laughs which Nietzscheans out of their time are liable to provoke, by stressing the elements of black farce in the play.

Kyle also produces a nice old-fashioned *coup de théâtre* by casting Machevil, the prologue who anathematises virtue, as Ferneze the high-toned, double-dealing Christian who, with piety on his lips, finally outvillains Barabas. Marlowe the atheist would have loved it. But this production is as faithful to Christopher Marlowe as 400 years and his own habit of spouting like Ancient Pistol touched with gold will permit.

THE LATEST OFFERING at the National Theatre (Cottesloe) is a regional play—*Ting Tang Mine*, by Nick Darke. Conceived during the British Miners' strike of 1984, it could have been tiresome agitprop about the done-down worker, embellished with enharmonic intrusions on a folk guitar. It is gentler and nicer than that, with more than a hint of cheerful fecklessness in the plotting. Telling the story of Cornish miners and their preposterous but hardly hateful exploiters, the adventurers (investors of risk capital), it lacks proletarian authenticity, thank God. Perhaps this is because its author is a Cornishman writing about his bloodymindedly independent countrymen.

Jan May, a male variant of the dumb blonde, returns from his supposed military adventures in Napoleonic times with a kitbag full of pesetas and other fiduciary issue, to find his wealth rejected by the uncomprehending Methodist miners, working their underground pitches for a penny a ton; there's

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a mild improbability for a start! He goes on to neighbouring Brigan, run by the man-eating she-capitalist in britches, Salathiel Trennanigan (Barbara Jefford cross-dressing on eight cylinders) who, sexually speaking—though this is a sweetly innocent piece—devours him like a chicken leg to be tossed over the shoulder Laughton-wise. Then, with her business confederate, she guides his spare thousands into massive over-production, the depression of the market, the exaltation of Jan May, Esquire, and the ruin of his family at neighbouring Ting Tang. The resolution of the piece—Jan goes bust because of a labour protection bill, confesses to having committed murder to get his pesetas from a shipwreck, and gets a second chance to invest windfall gold from America in Ting Tang, all in fifteen minutes flat—is naive, to put it mildly. But this work, which was talent-spotted at a regional festival, is naive in the artistic sense. More sympathetically it is a primitive: full of bright colours, simple emotions, jolly sex, transparent villainy, and a happy ending. It is a sort of industrial pantomime deliberately eschewing economics as much as the laws of probability.

It succeeds in spite of everything, partly because of its extreme good nature (there is a sort of affirmatory goodness which you can't quarrel with on footling artistic grounds), partly also because it is funny in its narration of disputing Methodist sects and their miner adherents. The miners swear an oath on the Book of Revelation: "Now you'm no need to do thaat. Revelations is a big book to go against. You could have swarn on Isaiah and got out of it."

Nick Darke has a fizzingly humorous way with words which turns pages and passes time. He is wonderfully helped by Matthew Scott's music, directed by Steve Edis. He is also blessed with excellent performances. Leslie Sands, a professional plain blunt man in hundreds of parts (mostly Yorkshire), is here devious, sharp, and credibly Cornish as the mine adventurer, Hailsham; Lesley Sharp makes an admirable slut as the gin-pouring factotum to randy he/she Trennanigan; while Robert Glenister's Jan May has all the slimline dumbo qualities required in an unmeritable lump so engaging in his inadequacy that fate wants to pick him off the floor. Such a piece has all the edges on the usual hard-Left propaganda piece, precisely because its level of political consciousness has not been raised (or lowered) beyond the natural decency of Cornish Methodism and friendly compassion. It is pleasant to go out of the theatre with teeth unjarred and a clean taste in your mouth.

IT COULD BE ARGUED that *Thursday's Ladies* at the Apollo, Shaftesbury Avenue, has no taste at all—or perhaps this English translation of a heavily feminine (but never feminist) French boulevard play carries the socially unforgivable odour of *crème-de-menthe*. I would venture the guess that with the commercial theatre slightly desperate for plays (God's own illiterate, Jeffrey Archer, opened a few weeks back), and the country enjoying, if that is quite the word, a government of nostalgic reaction, there may be a big killing for the angels and the impresarios in extensive borrowing from the commercial French theatre. Beckett, Genet, and dramatised Camus are for the huddled intelligentsia; but the French also produce the old-style well-made play.

Thursday's Ladies is a Paris apartment let with vacant possession. It is quite unbelievably old-fashioned, and staged here only as a vehicle for three mature, intelligent actresses—Dorothy Tutin, Siân Phillips, and Eileen Atkins. The sentimental flashbacks, as their tea-time reunions are broached by the substantial ghost of the brother of one/husband of another, make the machinery of a Cornish copper mine in the age of Napoleon look computerised.

The actresses concerned are considerable talents. Dorothy Tutin the most radiant Cecily Cardew that ever was, Siân Phillips who almost split TV screens with her Messalina in *I Claudius* and who will never be asked to play Mother Teresa, and Eileen Atkins giving a fair impression of being able to do anything—these three could give readings from the Domesday Book and fill an auditorium. But the tepid French tapwater of the piece—sentimental mum with feckless, nice son who inoffensively sponges off her, and her visiting friends, tart-tongued Hélène and commonsense Marie, who dispute the memory of Jean, brother, husband, and by the sound of it, tedious paragon, all rerun their recollected childhood and adolescent quarrels, and their immediate one about the last slot in the family vault—is everything that has ever been called, with well-reasoned scorn, bourgeois. It is a better constructed play than *Ting Tang Mine*, and with a bare twentieth of its talent.

FOR THIS reason, I would expect to see many more French plays in the West End. The French middle class have always been more strident and aggressive about their status than their British equivalents. While the British theatre has for some time now been intellectually sharp, combative, and readier for satire than sentiment, the French (on my limited impression) are rather good at comfort and reassurance.

A Smile at the End of the Line by Michel Vinaver, a vastly superior, rather enjoyable play, had a short outing here earlier in the year at The Orange Tree, Richmond, our most intelligent Fringe house. While it should not for a moment be compared with the mothballs and *crème-de-menthe* of *Thursday's Ladies*, it displeased our critics, who wanted something more bitter and less assuaging than a clever office comedy which had succeeded in Paris.

Shaftesbury Avenue being Shaftesbury Avenue, and its managements slow to do themselves a favour, *Thursday's Ladies* does its best in the West End, while *A Smile at the End of the Line*, like other successful plays by Vinaver, was passed up. Braving the critics, the West End ought to be able to make money out of both; and indeed from a wider haul of French plays. Many of these—oddly for that quarrelsome nation—have a soft quality to them, a comfortable punch-pulling easiness for which, in the rather hard country we have become, there could be quite a demand.

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George Szirtes

Burns Night by the Danube

(In Memoriam 1956)

1.

A time for slogans: know them well.
Would any of them ring a bell?
You'd recognise them by the smell,
Proust's Madeleines.
They tease your tongue and cast their spell,
Invade your teens.

Unreal applause, the names on tick,
A twitching body politic,
The headaches and the waiting, sick
With apprehension:
Before you rise you feel a crick.
Pre-menstrual tension?

You read your article and smile.
Should you have frowned? It's all on file,
Your Brief Lives brevities beguile
Astute inspectors
Of bric-à-brac, who scan for style
With lie detectors.

If they prick, do you not bleed?
Fertility is more than seed,
A broken egg is what you need
For omelette:
Your own two may well interbreed,
Intact as yet.

Then rhythmic clapping. It's the clap.
A name in a gazette or map
Is quite sufficient to unwrap
Your furled-up flag.
Does any bull perceive the trap
In a red rag?

Who can't afford to lose their grip
Develop a stiff upper lip.
A fellow student quotes a clip,
Something or other
Concerning you. Who let it slip
About your mother?

It's Mother Nature, Mother Church
And Mother Naked. Bring the birch.
The shameless hussies who besmirch
The holy altar,
Must first be rooted out. You search
And dare not falter.

Don't count the hours. The hours don't count.
Don't count your wages. The amount
Is relative. What's paramount
Is eye and ear:
The mouth or pen the only fount
And source of fear.

2.

October: funeral and feast.
The corn is in, the plot is leased,
Let earth rejoice with man and beast,
In conversation:
The food is good and the deceased
Is a sensation.

A few days in ten thousand find
Our Nevsky Prospects packed and lined
By dazed and vaguely happy, blind
Tiresian toilers:
Tomorrow they'll be cribbed, confined,
Back at the boilers.

What's never high cannot be brought
Down with a bump, is simply caught
Short in public places. Fraught,
And prone to panic,
Its one response is highly wrought,
Morose and manic,

A comedy, and therefore tense
As taxes or as common sense:
Relief, as always, is immense
At every prat-fall.
The villain has his impotence,
His feline cat-call.

But everyone gets walk-on parts
In history. The action starts.
The scenes are shot. Bring on the carts
Remove the dying.
Ill fortune flings her fatal darts,
The fur is flying.

If one could only keep all these
Safely between parentheses,
Initials carved in civic trees
To spite mere nature:
Proclaiming in telegraphese
To the vast future:

Specifics and particulars
Are everything. The burned out cars
Reveal their names. The city's scars
Are told and entered
In the records. Death appears
To have repented.

The children lying in the street
You will remember, and the feet
Protruding from beneath the sheet,
A shoe or dress.
Your own tall room, the three piece suite.
The happiness.

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The Guts of the City

On Zola's Lives—By GILLIAN TINDALL

OVER THE LAST ten years I have been buying *livre de poche* copies of Zola's novels on the railway station bookstall at Châteauroux in central France. The practical reason for this is a family house in the Indre; the reason, however, why I derive a distinct pleasure each time from the purchase, and put off acquiring Zola elsewhere till another holiday guest needs to be met or deposited, has more to do with the appropriateness of setting.

If this were the start of one more volume in the Rougon-Macquart saga I would begin by evoking the compact, late 19th-century station buildings with their clock under the summer haze, the main line dwindling one way towards the fertile Loire and the lure of Paris, the other towards the mountainous heartland of France. I would sketch in the dusty boulevards that circle from the station round the outer town —for Châteauroux was a small place till the railway expanded it; and even today, despite its microcosmic French apparatus of Hôtel de Ville, Préfecture, Palais de Justice, barracks and archives, it has only about half the population of Tunbridge Wells. Larks and cicadas can be heard as you wait for the humming train; open fields of maize and cows and poplars are a few minutes walk away.

Nearer the chopped-about centre, behind the busy, refronted shops, lurk fragments of the walled medieval town that persisted till the railway came. There too in side-streets are fit settings for fragmented or stealthy lives: grey shutters that are rarely seen open, wrought-iron gates warning of long-defunct *Chiens Méchants*, high walls concealing overgrown secret gardens—surviving habitats for Zola characters, both actual and archetypal. And there even today, one feels, are people silently incubating envy, calumny, hate, lust, greed, fear, avarice, starvation, ambition, religious mania, undying love or death itself, in the best and worst traditions of the extensive Rougon-Macquart clan, all under a suffocating cover of conformity like yellowy French varnish.

Châteauroux station restaurant enjoys a modest fame for its quality throughout central France. The town recently acquired a minor notoriety for the over-enthusiastic espousal of Le Pen's cause by a handful of local skinheads: the long-standing Gallic tradition of anti-Semitism, famously denounced by Zola himself, now adjusted to the persecution of migrant Arab workers.

What further ingredients do we need for our quintessential Zola novel? Not that any of Zola's novels are actually set in the Indre—the nearest tract of Zola-land would be that of *La Terre*, the Beauce, on the far side of the Loire—but it is surely significant of the relevance he still has to the French imagination that the station bookstall stocks almost the whole range of his works. What celebrated English 19th-century writer can be extensively purchased on the stall at Tunbridge Wells (West) or even Manchester Piccadilly? Moreover, there is a pattern of continuity here that would have pleased Zola's intricate creative spirit, his concern with destiny. His first proper job as a young man, apart from a dismal stint in the Paris Customs Office after he had failed his *bac*, was at the big Latin Quarter bookshop founded and run by Louis Hachette. Hachette was the first person to open retail outlets on French railway stations, foreseeing that there would be good sales for "popular novels, children's books, inexpensive editions of classics and popular science". Each of these categories now seems to be in some way pertinent to Zola's works.

It has become a truism of informed literary criticism that posterity has misjudged Zola. Popular he may have continued to be with large numbers of French readers (for unpopular, obscure writers do not remain perennially in mass editions), but the official line for much of the present century has been that Zola is there for adults to patronise and schoolboys to quarry out the sex n' violence.

Between the two World Wars, his entire entry in a standard French literary dictionary, *Bedier et Hazard*, 1924 (a Gallic equivalent of the *Oxford Companion*), read:

> "*Émile Zola, quoique volontairement obscène et systématiquement mélancolique, amuse par son imagination luxuriante. C'est en son fond un écrivain populaire, un feuilletoniste lyrique. Il faut convenir pourtant que "L'Assommoir" et "Germinal" sont des chefs d'oeuvre, d'un genre vite épuisé peut-être, mais des chefs d'oeuvre.*"
>
> ("Émile Zola, though wilfully indecent and persistently melancholy, captures our fancy by his luxuriant imagina-

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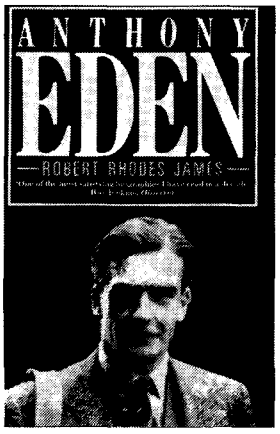

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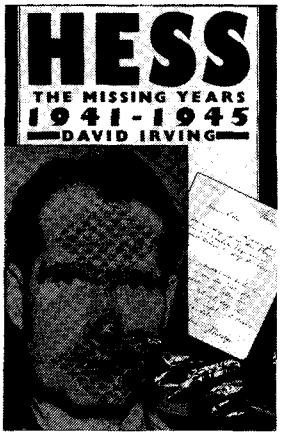

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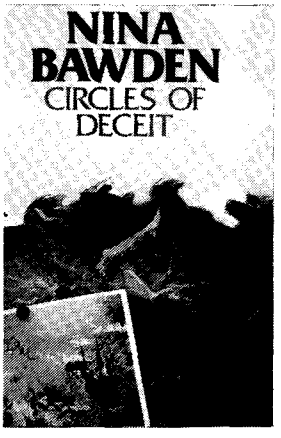

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tion. Essentially he is a writer for the masses, a producer of romantic popular sagas. One must, however, concede that *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal* are masterly examples—perhaps from a vein that is soon worked out, but masterpieces nevertheless.")

Angus Wilson, writing in 1952, in what has remained one of the best books on Zola to be produced on either side of the Channel,[1] said:

> "There has, in the last twenty years, been a rehabilitation or, at any rate, a serious defence of most of the nineteenth-century novelists. . . . Zola, however, has continued to lie neglected in the dusty cupboard to which he had already been assigned by many younger French writers in his own lifetime. . . . The mistake which most critics have made is to extend the ridicule which they express for his superficial materialist philosophy and the vulgarity of his home from his life to his works. Vulgarity and excess do exist in his novels, and a surface lack of subtlety, at times an irksome over-sureness, but these less happy features are integrally woven into a pattern of great complexity, modified by a descriptive power that proceeds from a very subtle sense of atmosphere, and invested with a dramatic force which springs from personal despairs and doubts as deep and complex as those of the greatest of the nineteenth-century novelists."

WILSON'S BELIEF that a revival was due seemed validated the following year by the appearance of F. W. J. Hemmings's *Émile Zola*, a sensitive study of the novels—the same author published a more extensive book on Zola in 1977.[2] Towards the end of the 1960s, in a collection of essays edited by Zola's French biographer Armand Lanoux,[3] the academic Roger Ikor analysed the way in which Zola had managed to displease both literary and political France by seeming too crudely materialistic for the one but a bourgeois pinko to the other. The Leftist tradition which dominated *lettres* in France up to a dozen years ago would have preferred *L'Assommoir* and *Germinal* to have been the work of a "genuine" proletarian writer rather than a portly and professional ex-journalist with a suburban mansion at Médan stuffed with ornate possessions. Ikor noted something many commentators both before and since have ignored—Zola's brilliant ability to capture the rhythms and preoccupations of uneducated French speech, even when writing indirectly—and hoped that in post-1968 France a new assessment of Zola was at last on its way, though he held the possibly mistaken view that abroad (for example, in America and in Russia) Zola had never ceased to be estimated at his proper worth.

The 1960s and '70s indeed saw a thickening crop of Zola

[1] Angus Wilson, *Émile Zola, an Introductory Study of his Novels* (Secker & Warburg, 1952, revised 1964).
[2] F. W. J. Hemmings, *Émile Zola* (Oxford University Press, 1953); *The Life and Times of Émile Zola* (Elek Books, 1977).
[3] Armand Lanoux (ed.), *Zola* (Hachette, 1969).

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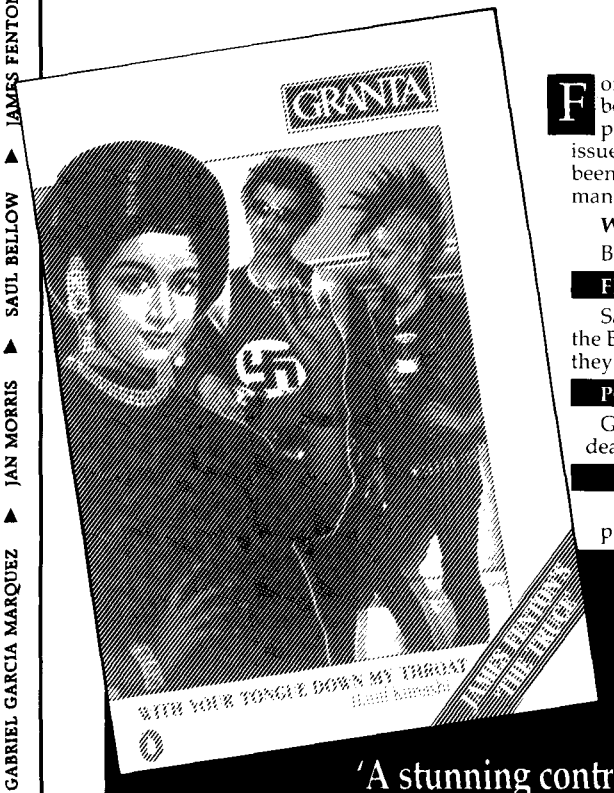

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studies in French, and in English the publication of at least one biography (Joanna Richardson's in 1978) as well as more specialised literary studies. In 1985 a competent, thoughtful Life appeared—by Philip Walker, Professor of French Literature at the University of California.[4] This autumn, another Life has been published—*Emile Zola: A Bourgeois Rebel*, by Alan Schom.[5]

Schom is also sometime of California it seems, but has "taken early retirement". He reiterates the idea—now, as a truism, paradoxically less true than it once was—that Zola has been underestimated. But oddly, in expressing a desire to set the world, or at any rate his ex-students, right about Zola's importance, he gives the impression that little or nothing has been written on the man since 1954. In his bibliography at the back, which is self-avowedly not complete ("The following are probably among the best known in this field. . . ."), he does mention Hemmings, Walker, and others, but otherwise the impression given by this study is of Schom the lone defender in an uncaring world.

This is not the only odd thing about Schom's book. All biographers of writers run the risk of creating a more vivid picture of the man than of the writer: it is much easier to describe and document someone going to school, growing up, fornicating, moving house, marrying, quarrelling, campaigning and becoming a public figure, than someone sitting alone at a desk engaged in the solitary and essentially secretive act of literary creation. Schom carries this inbuilt tendency to an extreme, giving a persistent if low-key impression that Zola's books are the least interesting thing about him.

Schom does not actually quote, but seems to have taken as his text, Henry James's patronising remark that Zola's involvement in the Dreyfus case in the years just before his death was "the act of a man with arrears of personal history to make up, the act of a spirit for which life, or at any rate freedom, had been too much postponed, treating itself at last to a luxury of experience." James, as an arch non-participant, was a fine one to talk! But, in any case, to treat the life of such a prolific and dedicated novelist as Zola as if it were all an unsatisfactory prelude to his eventual heroic vindication as the champion of an accused Jew, is crass of Schom. His biography endlessly catalogues the set-backs, defeats, unfulfilled hopes, disputes, and the falling-off of friendships that are part of any hard-working, ambitious life, but he never seems to give Zola's gradually accumulating success and solid achievement equal weight.

Virtually every chapter opens with some glum remark, if not on the state of Zola's finances or the state of the nation, then about his increasing girth or his marriage. (Schom thinks that Zola "should" have left his wife of many years for a laundress, as if he had been an American of the 1960s rather than a Frenchman of the 1890s; he does not seem to have noticed that under the influence of his clandestine, middle-aged idyll Zola's writing markedly declined, from the inspired realism of *L'Assommoir* to the propagandist stuff of *Fécondité*.)

[4] Joanna Richardson, *Zola* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978). Philip Walker, *Zola* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

[5] *Émile Zola: A Bourgeois Rebel*. By Alan Schom, Macdonald: Queen Anne Press, £14.95.

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PERHAPS THE PROBLEM is that this biographer was first drawn to Zola as an example of a writer who "suffered exile and pain as a result of his beliefs", and has addressed himself to this rather than to his subject's essential qualities. He is no writer himself: realities are always "harsh", income increases "astronomically", imaginations "run riot", bolts come out of the blue, and Zola on the same page is both "fed up" and "as surprised as anyone and almost delirious". The reader has to suffer passages such as:

> "The country was divided against itself and threatened to collapse in a state of anarchy if this continued. France was at a crossroads, and few realised that this crossroads was, in fact, the razor's edge. Zola was one of those tortured few."

Even so, I think Alan Schom could have avoided the elementary error of thinking that Zola's achievements as a journalist had little bearing on his novels—the old fallacy that journalism and creative writing are automatically in opposition to one another. When he does get round to giving us a brief indication of Zola's well-organised and deliberate work methods from Zola's own pen, he merely remarks gratuitously: "this is not the traditional, romantic view of the novelist at work." He thus misses his opportunity to explore the achievement of the Naturalist School, which he reduces to a list of names. (It is typical that the name of Arsène Houssaye appears several times in the text in connection with editorship or letter-signing, but nowhere does Schom mention that, on Zola's own say-so, the sexual habits of Houssaye were the model for those of Aristide Saccard and his son in *La Curée*—a fact of more than literary interest.)

It is understandable that a biographer should wish to document a life rather than enter into detailed descriptions of the work, but here too a fine opportunity has been lost: this biography is largely devoid of the sense of life's daily texture which so imbues Zola's writings. If ever a novelist were a suitable subject for a study placing him squarely in the context of his own times and topography, Zola is, for the twenty books of the Rougon-Macquart series form both in intent and in fact an "*histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*".

Whatever one may think of Zola's ideas on personality and inheritance—and I will not labour the point that the 20th century does not on the whole think much of them—they were characteristic of his era of Darwin and Taine, and were largely a pretext for a far more subtle and wide-ranging view of a country in the throes of commercial, industrial, and social evolution.

ZOLA'S SERIES, *Les Rougon-Macquart*, was essentially planned, and the first novel, *La Fortune des Rougon*, written, before the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 brought the Empire to an end. This unexpectedly abrupt change—which was, in reality, not much of a social change at all—provided a useful pretext for Zola to set his accusatory plots of turpitude in high places and degradation in low ones in an ostensibly historical framework; however, as he admitted late in life, overall narrative problems were thereby created. The Empire had

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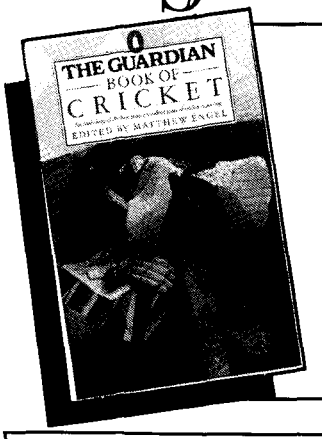

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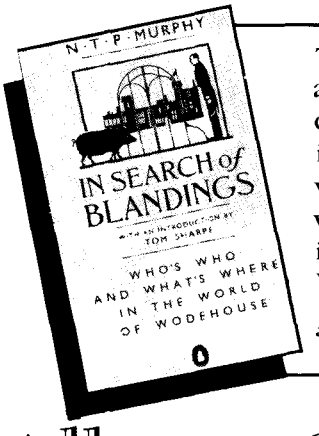

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lasted less than twenty years, scant time into which to cram the doings of several generations, and the creative novelist cheated a bit. For instance, the adult years of Nana, in the book of that name, and of Gervaise, her mother, in *L'Assommoir*, must actually take place over the same stretch of time, but as each novel is a separate creation the reader is not bothered by this foreshortening.

Had Zola chosen to set either book at the later dates at which he was actually writing them, they would have been equally valid as social documents, for the Parisian *demi-monde* was not extinguished at the Battle of Sedan any more than the Stock Exchange was, nor was drunken poverty wiped out by the Commune. Nor did the Haussmann transformation of Paris, which is such a feature of *L'Assommoir*, cease with the dethroning of Haussmann and the Emperor, but continued energetically all through the 1870s: indeed, classic "Second Empire" apartment houses, like the one whose inhabitants are cynically displayed in *Pot-Bouille*, were much thicker on the ground in Paris ten years after the Empire ended than they had been earlier.

It is the metaphorical dimension of this apartment house—all wrought iron, statuary, and dinner parties on the smartest floors fronting the street; dustbins, dark service staircases and socio-sexual exploitation to the rear—that gives an otherwise rather slight and satirical book its resonance. But then this is true of many of the novels: Plassans, for instance, is not just one southern French town (a miniaturised Aix, where Zola's childhood was spent), but every old walled town struggling into the modern era via France's repetitive, ritualised, revolutionary uprisings. It is not by chance that we are first introduced to Plassans through its old burial ground, both a real cemetery from Zola's childhood and a palimpsest of the past. Similarly a winding street in Les Halles is not just itself (and immediately recognisable until it disappeared a few years ago under the new Centre Beaubourg): it is also the quintessential guts of the city—*Le Ventre de Paris*.

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It is this combination of the particular and the archetypal which makes Zola such an extraordinarily haunting writer: place, with him, does not just bestow a local habitation and a name on events that might equally have been set elsewhere; the drama arises out of the place and its atmosphere, just as poor Abbé Mouret's fevered state is engendered by a wild garden that is both an actual garden and a symbolic, pagan paradise. Even the setting of the sensationally nasty domestic events of *Thérèse Raquin*, the novel which Zola wrote before his great series and which seems in a number of ways a rehearsal for it, has a wider application: a sub-text of the story is the anti-urban theme of the rural *petite bourgeoisie* migrating to the city—a basic drama in 19th-century France, as elsewhere.

The Raquins come to grief in Paris (to put it mildly) not just from the essential wickedness of humanity but arguably because deracination and social isolation destroy such fragile defences as they have. The horror of this moral disintegration is hidden away, throughout the novel, in the obscurely genteel corner of Paris where the tale, characteristically, opens:

> *"Au bout de la rue Guénégaud, lorsqu'on vient des quais, on trouve le passage du Pont-Neuf, une sorte de corridor étroit et sombre qui va de la rue Mazarine à la rue de Seine. Ce passage a trente pas de long et deux de large, au plus; il est pavé de dalles jaunâtres, usées, descellées, suant toujours une humidité âcre; le vitrage qui le couvre, coupé à angle droit, est noir de crasse. . . .*
>
> *A gauche, se creusent des boutiques obscures, basses, écrasées, laissant échapper des souffles froids de caveau. Il y a là des bouquinistes, des marchands de jouets d'enfant, des cartonniers, dont les étalages gris de poussière dorment vaguement dans l'ombre. . . ."*

("At one end of the Rue Guénégaud, coming from the river, lies the Passage du Pont-Neuf, a sort of narrow, dim corridor running between the Rue Mazarine and the Rue de Seine. It is about thirty paces long and two in width at the most; it is paved with yellowish flag-stones, worn and porous, which seem to exude a perpetual, acrid dampness. The pitched glass roof which covers the passage is blackened with a deposit of dirt. . . .

On the left-hand side lurk obscure shops, low and squashed-looking, whose doors give forth the cold draughts of cellars. There are booksellers here, dealers in toys and stationery, their display shelves slumbering in shadow, grey with dust. . .")

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In the same way, *La Bête Humaine*, set up and down the lines of the western railway from Paris to Le Havre, is a testament to Zola's obsessionally detailed gathering of material and to his command of the symbolic dimensions of space. The restless, intricate, literally "driven" nature of the chief characters' movements parallels their emotional lives: and the driverless troop train that, in the end, hurtles upstoppably through the stations with its hapless freight of drunken soldiers singing and shouting *"a Berlin!"* is an unforced symbol for the crisis and defeat of 1870.

It is a measure of the way in which Zola's verisimilitude transcends its ostensible historical setting that the story works even without this finale: as late as the 1930s it was filmed (with Jean Gabin as Jacques Lantier, the homicidal engine-driver), not as an historical tale but as a present-day one. This was not, presumably, a reflection on the private lives of inter-War *cheminots*, but simply an indication that the texture of French life as evoked by Zola was not confined to one brief era. In his series he documented a whole world, a way of life and thought and social organisation—one that had grown up slowly before 1850 and was not to pass away for a hundred years, if indeed it has yet.

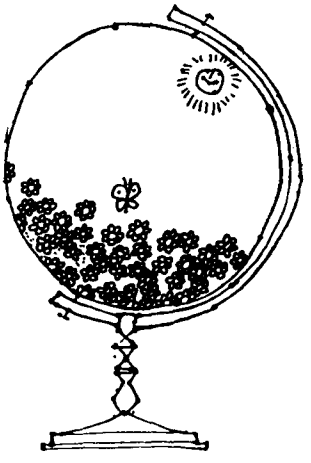
In England he also has his place, though there no longer seem to be many of the old-style school editions in French knocking around. Do A-level French candidates read him in English these days? If so, the quality of translation is variable; but they, or anyone else, can currently obtain twelve of the Rougon-Macquart series in English (six of these in Penguin)[6] including those generally regarded as the best but excluding, sadly, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, that wonderful evocation of the usurpation of old-style commerce by the great entrepreneurial bazaars, a meaty read for any social historian. Those more interested in the depths of old-style small shops can, however, enjoy *Thérèse Raquin* (it was serialised memorably on television a few years ago), and it is perhaps indicative of the passionate British obsession with steam trains that *La Bête Humaine* is available in *two* British paperback editions.

Castigated on both sides of the Channel for the graphic beastliness of his descriptions, the ultimately humane and decent Zola should have a long literary career in front of him.

[6] The novels of Émile Zola published by Penguin are *Germinal*, £3.95; *L'Assommoir*, £3.50; *La Bête Humaine*, £3.50; *Nana*, £2.95; *La Débâcle*, £3.95; *La Terre*, £3.95; *Thérèse Raquin*, £2.50. Other English editions include *The Beast in Man*, £2.95; *Restless House*, £3.50; *The Kill*, £2.95, published by Grafton; and in the Sutton pocket classics series, *The Fortune of the Rougon* and *His Masterpiece*, both at £3.95.

Context of Home

Talking of Europe—By CHRISTOPHER TUGENDHAT



SINCE THE CONCEPT IS SO hard to define, let alone to expound, *An Idea of Europe*[1] is a brave title for a book. Americans, Asians and Africans talk blithely of Europe and Europeans, invariably including Britain and the British within those terms. They are referring to a place on the map, a group of people who seem to them to be linked and more like each other than anyone else, and to a set of cultural and political attitudes. In practice they mean Western Europe rather than the region between the Atlantic and the Urals, but they have no more doubt about their terminology than do we when referring to Africa and Africans.

Europeans, however, find such generalisations unsatisfactory when they try to apply them to themselves. As soon as one is out of a speaker's mouth, his listeners are ready with exceptions and qualifications. The nationals of some countries go so far as almost to define themselves in contradistinction to Europe as a whole, even after becoming members of the European community. The British, Irish, Greeks, Spanish and Portuguese, for instance, talk about going to Europe when they mean continental Europe north of the Pyrenees and west of what used to be called the Iron Curtain. I remember being in Dublin when the results of the first direct elections to the European Parliament came through on television. They were displayed on three boards, one each for Ireland, Britain, and Europe respectively.

It is the French who have least difficulty in getting their minds round an "Idea of Europe". For them Europe is, in a certain sense, an extension of their personality, an area in which their country counts for more than any other and almost a ladder whereby others can become more like them. I experienced this approach at first hand shortly after my arrival in Brussels as a European Commissioner, when I told a French colleague I was sending my son to the French *Lycée*. "I can see you are a good European", he replied. When I asked whether his reaction would have been the same if I had selected a German, Italian, or Belgian school, or even a European school, he looked quite surprised. "But why would

[1] *An Idea of Europe. By* RICHARD HOGGART and DOUGLAS JOHNSON. Chatto & Windus, £11.95.

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you want to do that?" he asked. This is an approach that permeates what might be termed Official Europe in the form of the Community institutions, where French remains the dominant language, and bureaucratic structures and habits of thought are derived unmistakably from French models.

But there are others. Shortly before leaving Brussels I visited Trieste—once the great port of the Habsburg Empire—and went to see the Miramare Castle built by the ill-fated Archduke Maximilian before he went off to become Emperor of Mexico. The heart of the house is the library where there are busts of those whom he regarded as Europe's four great writers—Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare and Goethe. Not a Frenchman among them, which to someone accustomed as I was to the Francocentric atmosphere of Brussels came as something of a shock; yet as good a synthesis of the European genius in literature as one might reasonably find. To a Habsburg it must have seemed natural to think of Europe primarily in terms of the former Holy Roman Empire and of Rome itself, with Shakespeare gaining inclusion perhaps by virtue of the brilliance of the translation of his work into German.

Shortly after Maximilian had faced his firing squad, Bismarck united Germany. I do not know what busts, if any, he had in his library but his opinion of Europe in the political sense was characteristic. "I have always heard politicians use the word Europe", he wrote, "when they were making requests to other powers which they did not dare formulate in the name of their own country." Cynical as this may be, it must none the less strike a chord with anyone who has had personal experience of the Community's Council of Ministers.

The more blatant their pursuit of national interest, the more Ministers from the original six member States of the Community like to clothe it in European dress. This is among the reasons why the reputation of the Community procedure has become so tarnished. Mrs Thatcher does not like such "Eurospeak", and prefers avowedly nationalistic language. This too contributes to the general disillusionment, while laying her open to the charge of being anti-European. In turn, that makes it easier for other Governments to justify their opposition to her schemes, to each other, and to their own public opinion.

BISMARCK'S DEFINITION not only reflects the way governments talk; it also points up one of the enduring elements in the character of most European peoples, namely their nationalism. Different peoples began to define themselves in terms of national identity at different times—the Italians and Germans relatively recently, the Danes, English, Spanish, Portuguese and French a very long time ago. By its very nature, nationalism is fissiparous and usually a potent source of rivalry that in the past has all too easily spilt over into xenophobia. One of the great successes of post-War Europe (for which I believe the Community can claim more credit than it has received) has been to drain national feeling of the xenophobic tendencies that disfigured it for so much of the earlier part of this century and for most of the last. But this change cannot be taken for granted, and those tempted to do

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so would do well to reflect on the slogans and trappings as well as the behaviour of football crowds abroad, not least those from the United Kingdom.

National identity, at least in the form that makes it coterminous with the frontiers of a particular state, does not of course provide the only means by which Europeans define themselves. The Flemish and Walloons in Belgium, the Basques in Spain and France, the Bretons in France and the Welsh in Britain all bear witness to that. The ancestral voices of long-forgotten people, some of whom had their own cultures as well as their own states, are still to be heard in many parts of modern Europe, in some cases still speaking their own distinctive languages. But if regionalism runs counter to nationalism it cannot be said to be of much help in identifying an idea of Europe either. In general it tends to narrow men's minds and horizons even more than nationalism, although its effects have, for the most part, been less sanguinary.

So where are we to turn for something that may be said to be common to all Europeans and distinctively ours? Music is an obvious candidate, and so are painting and the novel. These three art forms have all evolved and been practised in recognisably the same form from the Urals to the Atlantic and from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean, with developments in one part of the continent being taken up in others, and centres such as Paris and Vienna in their respective heydays acting as poles of attraction to people of many different nationalities. All three are, of course, now equally part of the culture of countries elsewhere in the world to which Europeans migrated, and sometimes even of those to which they did not, as the Japanese adoption of Western classical music and forms of painting testifies. Still, they originated in Europe and we can claim them as part of Europe's contribution to the world's patrimony that others have sought to emulate.

Richard Hoggart and Douglas Johnson, the authors of *An Idea of Europe*, suggest class distinctions as another peculiarly European characteristic:

> "No other continent, including those which have been peopled mainly by Europeans, has such a self-conscious, determined, labelled and discussed sense of inequality. The history of Europe is the history of 'them' and 'us'."

I should have thought the distinctions of India and China at different periods of their history have been at least as great. Nevertheless, it is an interesting thought; and for the British, who find their own class distinctions such a source of wonderment to Americans, Australians and other English-speaking peoples, it may perhaps be reassuring to learn that in this respect at least they are thoroughly European.

The authors go on to attribute the class distinctions of European society, even in those countries which are now republics, to the influence of monarchy and kingship on the development of European society. Class distinctions take different forms in different countries: but in Western Europe

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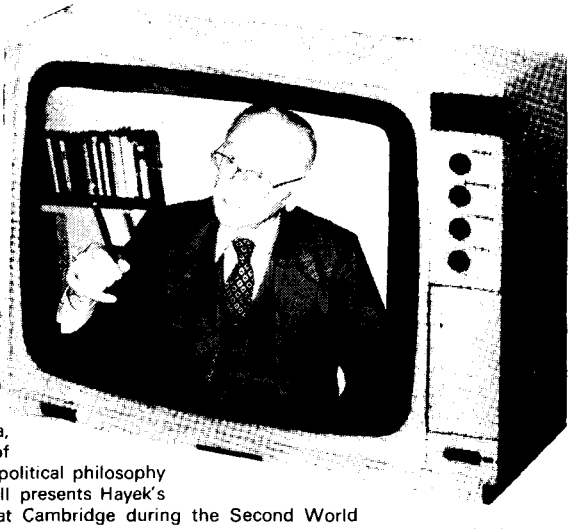

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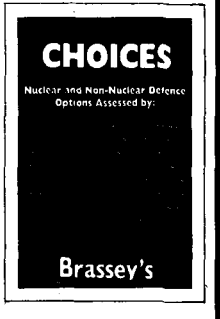

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their continuation has, as the authors point out, been accompanied by "the persistence of aristocracy". Indeed, this is in some respects more true of republics, such as France and Italy, than of some kingdoms, such as Denmark and Holland. There are few men and women anywhere in Western Europe who can lay claim to a title who do not use it, even if that means incorporating it into their names, as in Germany; and few places where it does not inspire an element of deference or hostility, and frequently a combination of the two. Aristocrats have, however, changed over the years. Once many of them led lives very different from the rest of us. That is no longer so. In terms of occupation, relaxation, dress and even their homes, it would be hard to separate them as a group from the middle class.

Much the same has happened to national differences. The old stereotypes of the Frenchman in his beret, the Dutchman in his clogs, and the cloth cap of the British working class have largely disappeared. Throughout Western Europe most people dress alike, watch many of the same TV programmes, listen to the same pop music and spend their money on the same things. This applies not only to such big items as cars, holidays, and consumer durables, but increasingly to food as well. Wine and mineral water are to be found in British supermarkets as in French, while the French and Belgians are as inclined to eat frozen food and hamburgers as anyone else. Even sexual mores are becoming more alike, with contraceptives as openly on sale in Italy as in Denmark.

These are the outward signs of an underlying convergence towards a common way of life. Moreover, we share not only our prosperity, our tastes and our indulgences. We also increasingly face a common set of aspirations and problems. In all our countries women are striving for equal opportunities at work, and families are having to adjust to the consequences. In most, the full integration into society of the children of the immigrants who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s, and the majority's reaction to it, raises major social and political questions. How to finance health care and allocate the scarce resources available to it is another common dilemma. The ageing of the population, as people live longer and the consequences of the decline in the birth-rate in recent years work their way through, is a problem almost everywhere. AIDS, drugs, and the inner cities are others. Manufacturing industry's difficulty in competing against the challenge of Japan and the newly industrialised countries could be added to the list.

In short, it is not just the way in which people live and spend their working lives which is now broadly the same across most of Western Europe: it is the things they agonise over and argue about as well. The response of governments varies from one country to the next; but with few exceptions the range of difference between the various national approaches is no greater than that between the different parties within a single state.

The Americans face many of the same problems, and some of their responses are similar. We can learn from them. But the United States is much larger and more diverse a country than any to be found in Europe, and the views of its people on the role and responsibilities of government have grown up in a different climate, so it must be classed in a category of its

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own. In Africa, Asia, and most of Latin America, not just the social and political agenda but the whole structure of society and the assumptions on which governments base their actions are so far removed from Europe as to make comparisons almost impossible.

It is thus in terms of their way of life and the range of options open to them that Europeans find themselves crowded into the same boat—and a different one from other people. This is a point at which one can, therefore, search for an "Idea of Europe" in the sense of a particular set of principles evolved within our continent, even if pursued also by others outside it, that can be said to inspire the way we tackle our common problems.

Professor Hoggart and Professor Johnson point us towards Paul Valéry and his suggestion that "the Idea of Europe means Greece, plus Rome, plus Christianity". To that they add the Enlightenment of the 18th century and its "belief in humanity rather than dogma". As a result, "Europeans were united in their self-confidence, their belief in progress, their certainty that men could transform nature as Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe had transformed nature." To that I would add a belief that emerged in the 19th century and took root in the 20th: the conviction that representative democracy based on universal suffrage is the only legitimate form of government. Happily, these concepts are not confined to Europe. The American Constitution and way of life are founded upon them and so are those of other countries—though, it must be said, mostly those that have been peopled mainly by Europeans.

As soon as one starts to develop this thesis, however, one finds oneself drawn on to the jagged rock of reality. What Valéry suggests, and whatever one might add oneself, can be applied to Western Europe. The further east one goes, the less true that becomes. While Russia, at the furthest point, is undoubtedly a European country in terms of the arts, its political philosophy, whether under the Czars or the Communists, has evolved along very different lines. Neither individual liberty nor representative democracy has ever received much shrift there. Nor have Russian leaders, Czarist or Communist, allowed them to flourish in any country controlled from Moscow. To many in the Communist world this is a source of sorrow and resentment, but in truth most of those countries—even in the brief period between the end of Austrian and Turkish rule and the coming of the Russians—have never fully subscribed to Western political values.

What is true of political philosophy applies equally to the way of life and the political and social agenda. While there are points in common between Western and Eastern Europe, the differences are far greater. The two societies have been cast in different moulds, and despite adaptations made by succeeding generations they remain apart. This is not to say, as Erich Honecker said during his recent visit to West Germany, that they are like fire and water that can never come together. The very fact that Germans are on both sides of the divide shows how absurd that proposition is. But for

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the moment there is a line, albeit blurred and indistinct in places and permeable in others, that divides Europe in two; and it is very hard to forecast when it might be eradicated.

An "Idea of Europe" will remain an elusive concept hard to define and difficult to expound for a long time to come. This is because Europe itself will continue to be a kaleidoscopic mix of interacting patterns, some very similar to each other, some unique, for as far ahead as one can see. But there is now one new element, unique to the late 20th century; and that is the European Community.

For the first time in the history of Europe a number of sovereign states have come together in a political system in which all are subject to the same rules, sovereignty is shared, cooperation the objective, and perpetual debate the norm. It is impossible to envisage a greater contrast than that between the spirit underlying the Community and the dreams of conquest and great-power compacts at the expense of smaller countries that have characterised all previous periods of European history. Just as the American Constitution at its birth was an experiment different from anything that had been tried anywhere else in the world, so is this. It represents a great ingathering of European peoples, beginning with six contiguous countries and now numbering twelve.

The imperfections of the Community are legion and well known. Some may be attributed to its relative youth in historical terms and to the problems attendant on its frequent enlargement, others to the sheer difficulty of what is being attempted. The longer it endures, however, the greater the chance of creating a context within which, while remaining separate and distinct, the different nationalities of Europe can feel equally at home. When that happens, the British as well as others may at last be able to talk of Europe and Europeans as naturally as Americans, Asians and Africans already do.

Lives or Works?

On H. G. Wells & Rebecca West—By MARGHANITA LASKI

SOME YEARS AGO, when I was chairing the Arts Council's Literature Advisory Panel, a new member joined it who advocated the inclusion of biography as an art form. Some people (or was it only I?) argued that while almost any creative effort could achieve art, biography was not necessarily an art form, as poetry was. But the panel decreed otherwise, and biography joined poetry and the novel in line for support by public money. If the argument is ever reopened, the two biographies under review could well form a part of it. At least Victoria Glendinning's *Rebecca West*[1] could count as art—whether good or bad art it is part of the purpose of this review to decide. Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie's *The Life of H. G. Wells*[2] (a paperback revision of the 1973 edition) makes no such implicit claim, and whether it is the better or the worse for this is also to be decided.

The reason for taking these two books together is that for ten years, from 1913 when she was twenty years old, Rebecca West was H. G. Wells's mistress, an affair that began in rapture and ended in ugly recriminations, made nastier by the running vendetta against Rebecca by the son of the union. The pair had other things in common too, though no more than with many of the rest of us. Both resented the—as it seemed then—unduly inferior social levels to which they were born. Both had less satisfactory sex lives than they dreamed of and felt they were entitled to. Both fantasised their own lives, contemporaneously and retrospectively. And both were writers.

Wells had the greater justification for being dissatisfied with his social origins. Certainly he came of that tradesman class from whom so many of our greatest writers have been drawn: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Johnson, Keats. But Wells's parents were at the very bottom of that pile: his father the owner of an always unsuccessful china shop in a building called Atlas House in Bromley where Herbert George—Bertie—was born in 1866; his mother a former ladies' maid, doleful with religiosity, determined that her sons should attain the highest gentility she could envisage, that of shop assistants in drapery establishments. To this end she gave Bertie the best education she could afford, and almost accidentally, a vision of a better life. For in 1880 Mrs Wells left husband and shop for the post of housekeeper at the grand if peculiar country establishment she had worked at before marriage. She was not a competent housekeeper and she did not stay the course. But the effect of Up Park on young Bertie was less to breed resentment than to codify an ideal. "Modern civilisation", he came to believe, "was begotten and nursed by the world of the great country houses", and an almost constant feature of his futuristic novels was to be world salvation based on a social, intellectual, genetic élite.

Almost nothing in Wells's life became him like his climb from the Bromley beginnings, from the drudge in the damn-

[1] *Rebecca West: A Life*. By VICTORIA GLENDINNING. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £14.95.

[2] *The Life of H. G. Wells: The Time Traveller*. By NORMAN and JEANNE MACKENZIE. The Hogarth Press, £7.95.

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able drapery establishments, to the nearly well-educated young man who discovered he could be a writer. Only relentless determination, often in the face of apparently totally discouraging failure, took him in 1884 to the Normal School of Science in South Kensington where the ageing Thomas Huxley bewitched the young man and, no doubt, sowed the pathetic ambition, never to be fulfilled, to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

By the time that Wells left the Normal School, what were to be his permanent patterns of life were set. He had begun to write. He had become involved in socialism at student level and was polemically debating. He had let sexual infatuation divert him from his real hopes for the future—he was soon to marry its object, his cousin Isabel, only to leave her all too soon afterwards for Catherine, known as Jane, whom after divorce, he married and stayed married to for all her life. But he had left the school less well qualified than he should have been, and he was already using breakdown—nervous, physical, hypochondriacal?—as an escape, and this he was to do for the rest of his life.

At teaching and at journalism Wells drudged for nearly ten years. "In three more years", say his biographers, "he achieved fame and put himself in the way of wealth." Before the end of 1897 he had written most of his short stories, as well as *The Time Machine*, *The Wonderful Visit*, *The Wheels of Chance*, *The Island of Dr Moreau*, *The Invisible Man*, and *The War of the Worlds*. As Ford Madox Ford put it: he "took literary London by storm". (Qy: who has done this in our own day, and what does it entail?)

Thereafter, the life-pattern doggedly repeats itself, the only minor changes being the celebrity of the names associated with it. There was social success. There were country houses in England, one custom-built, one leased from that eccentric Socialist peeress, Daisy Warwick; one of the photographs in *H. G. Wells* shows Wells at a house-party at Warwick Castle, though the other guests are seemingly drawn from the literary, not the aristocratic world. There was a villa in the South of France, a house in Regent's Park, and several other shorter-term dwellings, for an almost invariable sign of H. G. Wells's readiness for a new mistress was a restlessness that usually involved a change of home.

But no mistress proved satisfactory. Wells had a vision—one of many—of woman as free woman, in control of her destiny, and as such many readers took his most famous fictional heroine, Ann Veronica. But, as the MacKenzies make clear, a free woman to Wells was a woman who made herself free to love and serve him without thought of self; and, while patient Catherine contented herself with the life she had made as the great man's wife, her husband repeated incessantly a series of besotted advances, aggrieved withdrawals. Before Rebecca West there had been, notoriously, Amber Pember Reeves, daughter of William Pember Reeves (a founder member of the Fabian Society and third director of the Webb-funded London School of Economics). About this

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affair the MacKenzies are almost embarrassingly discreet, concealing the name of the man Amber married to give respectability to the daughter Wells fathered, and also what became of the daughter, beyond the fact that Wells paid for her schooling and attended her 21st birthday party in 1930. After Amber, the Countess von Arnim (Elizabeth of the German Garden); then Rebecca West, and then—but this is not necessarily afterwards—Margaret Sanger, the American campaigner for birth control, and Odette Keun, for whom he built the Provençal villa, and Moura Budberg, whom he could not bear to relinquish even after he had discovered she was a Soviet spy. There comes a point when we feel like saying, with Dorothy Parker: "And after that I always get them all muddled up."

That infatuation dies out was something Wells never seemed to learn, but once the affair had passed the stage of rapture he went off it, and most quickly when domesticity reared its head or when a mistress made it plain, as some of them did, that she expected him to leave Jane for her. There was never any question of *that*, and when Jane, in 1927, was discovered to be dying of cancer, Wells left Odette Keun and the Provençal villa, returning only for occasional revivifying visits until Jane died in the autumn of that year.

Certainly H. G. Wells needed a wife, and he hoped after Jane's death that Moura Budberg would accept him. But she would not, and then it was slowly downhill till death in 1946, an outmoded author, an unwanted political theorist, still rejected by the Royal Society despite his gallant thesis for a doctorate at London University in 1942, devoted to this sole end. He was, say the MacKenzies with just acerbity, stamped as the man of Atlas House, rather than of the Royal Society. Cocky, randy, kind to his friends but lacking sensibility, fantasising his life backwards, forwards, and all ends up—and notably in his determination to believe, not that he pursued women but they him—is he a man who would have been worth a substantial biography if he had not been a writer? Or, as a writer only, and not as influential in the socio-political life of the larger society? Ought we not to accept as given that no biographer can ever make sure connections between the life and the works, can proffer more than guesses about the relationship?

SIMILAR QUESTIONS must be asked about Rebecca West. She had far less reason than Wells to resent her origins, but resent them she did, and all her life long. Born in 1892, Cicily, as she was then called, was the youngest of the three daughters of Charles Fairfield, a clever, feckless Anglo-Irishman, and of Isabella Mackenzie of Herriot Row, Edinburgh. It is true that Papa skedaddled from the family in 1901, but Cicily had a good education, and the family home her mother made in Hampstead Garden Suburb was one of culture. But Cissie, a fantasist not only in sex, like Wells, but in all aspects of her life, bitterly resented the inadequacy of the background from which she launched herself into the world, though heaven knows it was a better springboard than most future writers and intellectuals could leap from. In particular, she bore a lasting resentment against her clever oldest

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sister, who became the well-known doctor, Letitia Fairfield. Victoria Glendinning introduces her book with a prologue of Cicily at lunch with Letitia (now aged 90; Cicily, that is Rebecca, in her 80s), the two old ladies spitefully cross-firing at each other, unable to agree even on the aristocratic connections they are both claiming.

Cicily Fairfield became Rebecca West shortly after she had started writing for the new feminist weekly, *The Freewoman*, in 1911. The name is that of a married man's mistress who commits suicide in Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*, but there does not seem to have been any significance in her choice of this pseudonym; and, in any case, it was soon to become, and ever after to be, the name of the one-time Cicily Fairfield, its Ibsenite origin almost forgotten.

Of the two years between 1911 and 1913 there was no need for fantasy, for they were years of unmitigated success, social and intellectual. At that age Rebecca could fairly be called beautiful, in a melting, sexually appealing, womanly way (the best photograph is No. 34 in the Wells book). And as journalist, she was an editor's dream, bold, fearless, original. Her articles led to friendship with Ford Madox Hueffer and Violet Hunt and their set, and when *The Freewoman* folded, Rebecca was taken on by the *Daily News*. It was, however, in *The Freewoman* that she had toughly reviewed Wells's novel *Marriage*, and was invited by the Wellses to lunch at their country house. Two years later the affair began (with a kiss in what is now a bathroom in my niece's house in Church Row, Hampstead, but was then Wells's study), and on their second coupling, Rebecca became pregnant.

She did not want the child, never (to his later distress) pretended that she did, and it is hard to see why she didn't have an abortion. Her family stood by her, but this was the last thing she wanted. Wells, no doubt with the Amber scandal in mind, insisted on secrecy, and for the next few years Rebecca's was a dreary life, tucked away from the literary world in a series of dull houses outside London. Small wonder that Rebecca resented the furtive nature of the relationship, that Wells soon began to tire of it, or that hers with her son Anthony was soured from the start.

But Rebecca was, to her fingertips, a writer, and through the worst time she managed to keep her fingerhold in the world of letters. Soon she was re-established in the literary mainstream from which Anthony's infant years had excluded her. Anyone who was anyone in the literary world, she knew, especially after her lecture tour to the United States in 1923. Left-wing politics involved her at that time, and she took on herself the organisation of Emma Goldman's campaign in England; though it turned out that Emma Goldman's appeal to the English was very limited indeed. There was a lover or two (young John Gunther was one) but what Rebecca was looking for was stability and marriage—essentially a rich marriage.

She had hopes of Beaverbrook, was something very like in love with him, but an attempt at an affair proved abortive and he broke off whatever there was. In 1929 she was "hard-headedly", says Glendinning, contemplating marriage with a rich Jewish butter-and-egg merchant, but Henry Andrews

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turned up—"not a gentleman", Rebecca said, for all he had been to Oxford and spoken well at the Union, not quite a banker, though he inherited good money from an uncle who was, and able to give Rebecca a life of rich conventional respectability until his death from cancer in 1968.

Rebecca must have been as difficult to be married to as she was as mistress or, indeed, friend. Whenever she took against anyone, with or without a fantasy-built reason, she could be bitterly, heartlessly cruel. But she could be intelligent, witty, brilliantly judgmental, up to her death in 1985. "She never mellowed", Glendinning says on almost her last page; and this is praise.

It appears that Glendinning's book, getting on for 300 pages, is to count as the short life Dame Rebecca wanted written, as well as a full biography, now in preparation by Stanley Olson. So again we may fairly ask: Is this person's life worth writing about, apart from the work? Glendinning suggests that in other times she might have been an abbess or a witch. I see her as a forceful Jewish matriarch, a bully-woman, and not too inaptly since she was often thought of as Jewish, had many close Jewish friends, and envied Jewish family life. But in any such imagined roles, indeed in her own, is she worth a biography, let alone with a "full" biography to follow?

I JUDGE THAT SHE IS NOT. What I think she is greatly worth, and Wells too, is assessment as a writer, not only in a detached literary context, but in the relationships established, the influences wielded, by both writers over their readers. This makes it the stranger that Glendinning has nothing to say about the work from this point of view, little of it as cool assessment, and of this, some crassly inept. The MacKenzies are more analytically expansive about Wells's work, but of its important influence on the ordinary educated reader they have almost nothing to say.

The Webbs (the MacKenzies' former subject), and Bernard Shaw were more perceptive. Of one strain in Wells's work, the idealistic-prophetic, they recognised the potential value in achieving Fabian ideals. Perhaps the most heart-warming strand in *The Life of H. G. Wells* is of the infinite trouble Shaw and Beatrice Webb took to retrieve Wells from the nasty social aftermath of the scandal over Amber Pember Reeves, to conciliate him when he went off, as so often, in destructive tantrums, the gentle tolerance with which they sought to keep him in the fold. It was all to no avail. Wells was hell-bent to be accepted as world-salvation's prophet, and right to the end he could never believe he wasn't up to it.

But at levels far lower than those Wells sought to work upon, he was a very important writer indeed, and I can speak with the knowledge of feeling, for he, like Rebecca, was important to me. I didn't know that *Ann Veronica* was about his own search for what he counted as a free woman. For me, as for thousands of other readers, *Ann Veronica* was the clarion call to family-tied, convention-based girls that even in a male-dominated world it was possible to break free. I didn't know that the final Utopia in *In The Days of the Comet* was devised to respectabilise the *ménage à quatre* that H. G. was then

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hankering for. What I, and no doubt thousands of other readers, got from the book was the inalienable belief that Utopia was peaceful, loving, beautiful: most importantly, that it was a beautiful city, a richer development from William Morris's small white villages.

Wells was indeed a prophet—not, importantly, of the disaster he presaged since *The First Men in the Moon*, but, with Morris, of the truly brave new world of socialist ideals; though perhaps, at this point, we should pause and remember that Wells's world, as against Morris's, was always to be ruled by an élite. Still, so is the present Labour Party. And if the Conservative Party offers money in the pocket, the house deeds in the safe, the acceptable face of socialism has always been such a dream as Wells was importantly influential in providing, not in his political forays or his ponderous non-fictional tomes, but through his novels; and it is some such new vision that the Labour Party most lacks now.

We must accept, as the MacKenzies make clear, that such nearly excellent novels as *Mr Polly* and *Mr Kipps* and *Mr Lewisham* are all fictionalisations of aspects of Wells's life. This is not a fact that matters to readers. What matters is that these books extended our sympathies, almost as Dickens had done, and just as the most brilliant of what we can now call the science-fiction stories extended the imagination of a generation, and led to the often excellent idealistic science-fiction utopias—though often expressed, as by Wells too, as cacotopias—in the 1950s.

Those stories were, I believe, in literary judgment, the best that he wrote. But his importance to literature is moderate only. Where Wells's importance must rest is on his influence over the idealistic thinking of a generation, or two. I cannot find that his life rates a biography of nearly 500 pages—it was first published in 1973, and an epilogue is added now. The present fashion is, however, for exploration of life and personality rather than of work, its worth and its influence, and for such a biography the MacKenzies are excellent. Admittedly, the book becomes boring, but the fault is the repetitiveness of Wells's life, not the authors'. There is no art about this book. It is not that it lacks art. It doesn't need art.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's treatment of her author's books is so cursory as to give the impression that she is leaving that ground to a critical study of them now in the making. What little she does say is sometimes right and worth saying. She is right to say that the Yugoslav book of 1941-42, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, is a work—she says a *great* work, but I think not—of "romantic art constructed over a framework of research and scholarship. Judged by the strict criteria of this framework, it is excessively unbalanced, sometimes wrong, sometimes silly."

She is right to say (that is, I agree with her) that the long-short stories of 1935, *The Harsh Voice*, are the best Rebecca ever wrote; but simply to say that they "are about love, hate and money" is quite grossly inadequate—and in any case, one of them is far more accurately described as being about insensitivity and murder.

On Rebecca's first book, *The Return of the Soldier* of 1918, Glendinning is unpardonably casual. She gives the publication date wrongly in her text as 1917 (though correctly in the Bibliography), and fails to notice (or to tell us) that it is dedicated to J., her pet name for Wells. (His for her was "Panther", and the boy was named Anthony Panther Wells; but later they called each other "Leopard" and "Cheetah".) This story, Glendinning says at the beginning of a paragraph, is about "the healing significance of parenthood", and at its end, that it is a story about salvation through unselfish love. Neither will do. Remembrance of his dead child is the story's device to restore the shell-shocked soldier to full recollection, but whether this is salvation or damnation is the book's core question, left with the reader. I have always found this a hauntingly important story; surely, in any biography of Rebecca, her first novel, written under conditions of loneliness and ill-health and yet reflecting nothing of this, deserves extended attention.

So far, indeed, as the work is concerned, it is on the novel of 1936, *The Thinking Reed*, that Glendinning falls shortest. She notes that it is dedicated to Rebecca's husband, but not in what terms. The dedication reads:

Vivamus quod viximus, et teneamus
Nomina, quae primo sumpsimus in thalamo,

an expression of gratitude for the pleasures of the marriage bed, embarrassing as it stands, and the more so once we have learned from Glendinning's book that, after the mid-1930s, Henry visited Rebecca's bed no more.

BUT I AM CONVINCED that Glendinning (and several other people) have got *The Thinking Reed* all wrong. It is a funny novel, she says—and so, in bits, it is. But she accepts Rebecca's own description of the novel's themes, "the effect of riches on people, and the effect of men on women, both forms of strategy". I have always thought this one of Rebecca's *post-facto* rationalisation fantasies. I am sure that *The Thinking Reed* is a romantic novel, an intelligent woman's popular romance, an up-market version of *The Pursuit of Love*, and I have read and enjoyed enough popular romance to recognise one when I meet it. All through Rebecca's life, I believe we see a Cinderella yearning for her Prince—in this story the life that the cool, beautiful, intelligent American Isobelle can live in France after marriage to the rich motor-car manufacturer, who is not, as Glendinning makes him, a Jew: the distant Jewish strain is something his devoutly Catholic family never refers to.

To see that Rebecca's ambition, or even part of her ambition, was to be firmly established as a rich woman in the right society is to find that many inconsistencies in her life fall into place. To see her writing, or part of her writing, as the work of a romantic novelist too intelligent for that role is to explain much. As the life of an interesting woman, Glendinning's book is good; and if anyone wants to count it as art, nothing against this, though less undeniably for it than in her earlier lives of creative women. But, more than most people, what Rebecca West needs now far more than a Life is a sensitive critical appreciation of her works.

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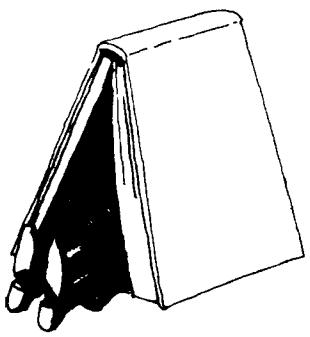
Scotching One's Tongue

From "Pomme d'amour" to Palimony—By D. J. ENRIGHT



OBSERVING THAT the word "literate" once denoted the ability to read and write, whereas, nowadays, reviewers praise authors for being literate as if it were an extraordinary phenomenon, Jacques Barzun proposes that "This shift is due to the prevalence of bad prose and to a new worry about the state of the language."[1] He welcomes the worrying, at least. Two causes of decline in all modern European languages are the influence of "experimental" art and the doctrines of linguistic "science". Barzun notes that "modern grammarians have thundered against rules and fought the idea of correctness". The only welcome aspect of this is that before long it must lead to the extinction of modern grammarians.

Strange monsters rear their heads. Not merely *conscientisation*, the developing of a social conscience, and *acerbic*, brought in because *acerb* didn't sound like an adjective (notwithstanding *superb*), but *roentgenogram* (noun and verb) replacing the *X-ray* that some hospitals and medical journals have banned. *Fundament* is edging out *foundation*, even though "those who look up the accepted meaning of this impostor will be shocked to the bottom of their souls". Dr Johnson, we recall, caused titters when he opined that some woman had "a bottom of good sense". Whereupon he slowly pronounced, "I say the *woman* was *fundamentally* sensible"; and, Boswell records, "We all sat composed as at a funeral".

When Barzun places the sentence "She was convinced to buy" under the rubric "Verbs To Turn Right Side Out", I can't tell whether it is the structure or the passive voice he deplores, or the word *convinced*. The latter, I hope, since the (American?) employment of *convince* in place of *persuade* has made great strides in this country. A valuable distinction is thus blurred, and something more than a nuance lost. *Persuade*, with its etymological sense of "advise" and its suggestion of "suave", is altogether gentler than *convince*, cognate with "conquer". Possibly the conflation results from the euphemistic or ironic use of *persuasion, persuader*, connoting something more drastic than *convince*.

We can be in general agreement on the subject while differing on particular points, of course. Barzun spurns *workaholic* and *breathalyser* because *-aholic* and *-alyser* are meaningless; yet the coinages serve a need, are comprehensible and pronounceable, and are surely here to stay. The British expression *all that*, as in "They say it's a good movie but it's not all that good", he considers "one of those imports that this country could do without". I don't myself think it's all that bad. An import *we* could do without is *whitewash*, meaning "to beat an opponent so thoroughly that he fails to score at all". On seeing the headline "AUSTRALIA WHITEWASHES ENGLAND", I thought the old colony had turned soft. (But too late to do anything about it; "*US colloq. 1884*", my dictionary says.)

He also disapproves of *palimony*. For one thing, those concerned were more—and are now less—than just good friends; and he accuses the New York City fathers of succumbing to baby-talk in adopting *TriBeCa* for the triangle below Canal Street. Yet the word trips off the tongue, which is more than can be said for *roentgenogram* and *conscientisation*.

> "If we were really as clever as we suppose, we would coin true novelties, as Eastman did with *kodak* and Van Helmont with *gas*."

Admittedly, these terms have the advantage of age, but what has gas to do with "chaos", or a camera with a bear—and one with an "i" missing, at that? Besides such witticisms as "the ubiquitous *-wise* guys" and "wall-to-wall carping", Barzun comes up with some handy neologisms of his own: *addictionary* (to denote addictedness to dictionaries), and *aristocattiness* (apropos of Nancy Mitford's attitude to Americans).

The finest of Barzun's essays is in defence of a common language. Without disrespect to dialects, which have their particular attractions, the standard tongue is the truly democratic form of the language, whereas "jargon, dialect, slang are exclusive by nature". The standard language is "a creation over time by a whole people, an achievement kept in being by its speakers and in order by its literature". Barzun professes amazement that professional groups of teachers of English are found attributing some sort of pre-eminence to

[1] *A Word or Two Before You Go. . . .* By JACQUES BARZUN. Wesleyan University Press, $14.95; Harper & Row, £13.50.

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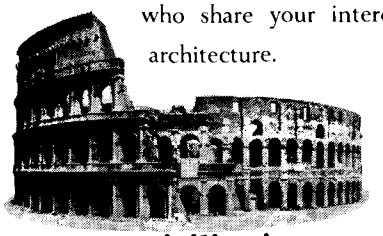

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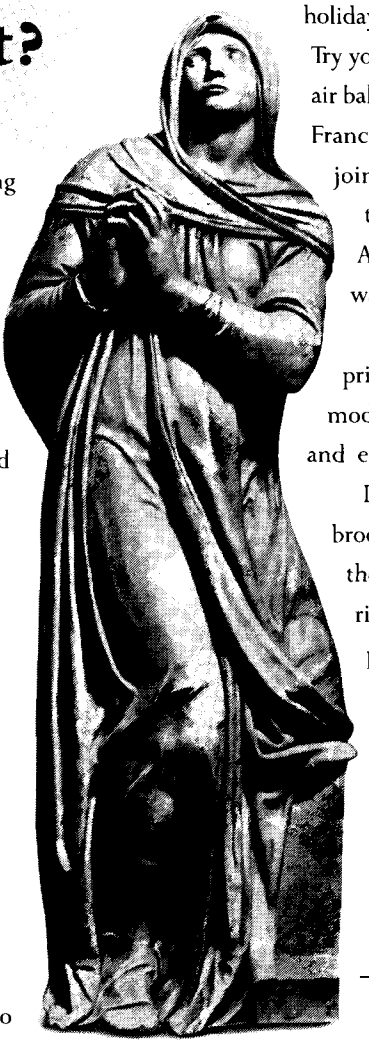

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dialects, whether Hispanic or Black, or whatever. It is exactly such groups that would be doing that—not their pupils, not the Hispanic business man cited here, who saw Standard English as a right that no one should be denied.

Earlier in the book, Barzun reflected on the absurdity of a biographical note in an encyclopaedia: "Hating cruelty and suffering as he did, he could never have been satisfied by a life entirely in scholarship", and asked whether campuses were so vicious as to be bearable only on a part-time basis. Perhaps the sentence makes better sense than he perceived.

Horse Feathers and *Heavens to Betsy!* (reprints of books first published in 1958 and 1955 respectively) are given over to fun and games, with a little instruction thrown in.[2] The first supplies not only the dictionary explanation of *Darby and Joan* but also an extract from the source of the expression, a ballad printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1735, entitled *The Joys of Love Never Forgot*:

> *Old Darby, with Joan at his side,*
> *You've often regarded with wonder:*
> *He's dropsical, she is sore-eyed,*
> *Yet they're never happy asunder.*

It is pleasing that, despite their age and unfortunate disabilities, the couple survive today in the name of a widespread club (seemingly not an American institution). *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, keen to outdo its rivals, claims that the French equivalent is *St Roch et son chien*. This denotes "inseparables"; but a closer match is the even more ancient *Philémon et Baucis*. The author, who was the editor-in-chief of the Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary Series, has spared himself the old colloquialism *funk* (probably from *fumus*, to smoke or stink through fear), his own name coming no doubt of nobler stock: "spark" or "scintillation" (as in the German *funk*, spark, and *funken*, to transmit a radio broadcast, which US characters named "Sparks" used to do).

Under *belladonna* he gives the origin favoured by lexicographers—the Venetian use of the plant's juice as a cosmetic—and adds the theory that the name came from a different usage, by an Italian called Leucota who specialised in killing beautiful women. Having indicated the etymologies of "butter" and "Scotch", dictionaries tend to fall silent concerning *butterscotch*. *Collins English Dictionary* ventures, "perhaps first made in Scotland". But Funk throws light: this variety of candy or toffee has no connection with Scotland, or with the whisky; "scotching" (scoring, marking with shallow cuts) is what is done to it as it is cooling. Even so, there is a link with the well-known Scotsman, Macbeth:

> *We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it;*
> *She'll close, and be herself.*

Hopscotch, referring to the lines scotched or scored on the ground, is of the same breed.

Monkey-wrench is less likely to derive from the creature's jaws than from its inventor, either a Britisher, Moncke, or a Yankee, Monk. *Caterwaul*, however, is indeed the wauling uttered by cats; whereas *farthingale*—a garment which Funk, displaying a curious animus, hopes will never come into fashion again—has to do neither with farthings nor (despite memories of Marilyn Monroe and her wafting skirt) with gales. The name is a corruption, via the French, of the Spanish *verdugado*, from *verdugo*, "rod", alluding to the framework supporting the garment. Another term for it was *roundabout*: no doubt traffic would have to skirt cautiously round a woman thus dressed. This term, we hear, has been in fairly recent use in America for a short jacket terminating somewhere round about a boy's bottom.

Entries such as *sadism, moonstruck, hamlet* (no tie-up with hogs), *Frankenstein, pipe-dream*, seem superfluous. But Funk is addressing people who may think that *taciturn* has to do with turning and *fanfare* with either a fan or a fare. While Americans talk of *exclamation point/mark*, the British—so he alleges—are content with *exclamation*, "or occasionally with the older terms, *ecphonesis* or *epiphonema*". *Very* occasionally, I would say.

The first *ventriloquist* (we are informed) was a witch out of whose belly strange voices spoke. (Not to be confused with a vulgar *péteur* or *péteuse*.) *Love-apple*, described by modern dictionaries as archaic, has no connection with Eve or Eden—though Funk says that his mother, a virtuous woman, avoided the article since it was reputed to possess aphrodisiac properties. The name, and hence the properties or improprieties, arose from a misunderstanding in translation, it appears. The tomato began life in South America, and was introduced via Spain and then Morocco into Italy, where it was called *pomo dei Moro*. Finding its way to France, the apple of the Moors was naturalised as *pomme d'amour*. The current appellation derives from Mexican *tomatl*.

Coconut or *nut* as slang for "head" is virtually a return to the source, in that the coconut was so named after its resemblance to a head, or a face, or at any rate a facial expression. *Coco* in Portuguese (it was they who discovered the fruit in the Indian Ocean) signifies "grimace". For *hock* and *hock-shop* dictionaries point to Dutch *hok*: hutch, prison, debt. More picturesquely, Funk prefers to believe that the words relate to Hocktide, an old festival kept on the second Monday and Tuesday after Easter (*hock* here being of *unkn. orig.*). On one of these days the village women seized and bound men, demanding a modest ransom for their release, and on the other the men did the same to women. The proceeds from this innocent merriment were handed over to the churchwardens for parish work.

Heavens to Betsy! is the mixture as before, but in slightly longer draughts. Thus the entry on *to play fast and loose* treats us to an excerpt from a book of 1847 with the resounding title, *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words, Obsolete Phrases, Proverbs and Ancient Customs, from the Fourteenth Century*. The cheating game in question, played at fairs (which have nothing to do with playing fair), was:

[2] *Horse Feathers and Other Curious Words. Heavens to Betsy! and Other Curious Sayings*. By Charles Earle Funk. Harper & Row, $5.95, £4.95 each.

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"played with a stick and a belt or string, so arranged that a spectator would think he could make the latter fast by placing a stick through its intricate folds, whereas the operator could detach it at once. . . ."

The game may be archaic and obsolete; not so the idiom.

One theory has it that *mad as a hatter* is a distortion of *mad as an adder*. But Funk agrees with *Brewer* that hatters had more reason for madness. The mercury used in the making of felt hats eventually caused an uncontrollable twitching, akin to St Vitus's dance, which was taken as a sign of insanity. (There is no question of the hatter being in the throes of sexual excitement *à la* March hare.) *Deaf as an adder* ("that stoppeth her ear" says the Psalmist) is another story, deriving from an oriental belief that snakes would try to thwart charmers by thrusting the tip of the tail into one ear and applying the other firmly to the ground. Incidentally, the Australians have a saying, "as mad [angry] as a cut snake", "cut" signifying not merely scotched but castrated.

Shangri-la needs no gloss, but it is interesting to learn that for security reasons Roosevelt jocularly informed reporters, during World War II, that bombers heading for Tokyo had taken off "from Shangri-la". (Come to think of it, if we need a code-name for Britain, there's a pretty one.) *All my eye and Betty Martin*, however, has aroused much speculation but found no definitive answer, and no better conjecture than the old one: that the phrase was brought back from abroad by a British sailor who strayed into a Catholic church and misheard the words, "*O mihi, beate Martine*", an invocation to St Martin. The fact that no such Latin prayer can be found, Funk observes, casts doubt on the theory. This objection cannot easily be made to an alternative derivation, proposed in a book entitled *The Phoenician Origin of Britons, Scots, and Anglo-Saxons* (1914) and cited in Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang*: from *O mihi, Brito Martis*, "Oh (bring help) to me, Brito Martis", the lady being identified as the tutelary goddess of Crete, associated with the sun-cult of the Phoenicians. Brito Martis—whose name Spenser borrowed for his chaste Welsh female knight, Britomart, perhaps because it suggested Briton and martial—was a companion of Artemis and the inventor of hunting nets. She was pursued lustfully by Minos, flung herself into the sea, and was hauled out by fishermen. Her name, meaning "sweet maid", occurs as that of the Moon-goddess in Eastern Crete (according to Robert Graves in *The Greek Myths*).

PARTRIDGE lists a Cheshire dialect expression, *all my eye and Dick's hatband*, seemingly related to *as queer* (or *tight*) *as Dick's hatband*, which Funk and *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* both trace to Richard Cromwell, "Tumbledown Dick", the ineffective son of Oliver, and the crown he never wore. Partridge also mentions, as related, *Dick's hatband*: "A makeshift: proletarian and provincial."

Betty Martin is no relation to the lady of Funk's title; *Betsy* is a mystery he has failed to solve—Betsy Ross, maker of the first American flag? . . . Betsy, pet name of the frontiersman's rifle?—although he has met countless people who have used the phrase all their lives. Another Americanism, *up Salt Creek without a paddle* (incorporating words from a campaign song of 1884 called *Blaine up Salt Creek*), may be the original of the ruder and better-known locution. This latter was glossed by Wentworth and Flexner in their *Dictionary of American Slang* (1960) as "Originally from homosexual usage". Quoting them in *A Dictionary of Catch Phrases*, Partridge adds, "which may or may not be true of US usage, but is not, I believe, true of British usage". Thank you for those few kind words, sir!

WORDS AT WORK is altogether more earnest, and thoroughly pragmatic, as behoves public lectures given in Singapore (where nothing but the best, or the most useful, is good enough) by the Lee Kuan Yew Distinguished Visitor.[3] Not that the book is devoid of lighter moments. It relates the story of a customer in a bookshop who said to the assistant: "I've come for T. S. Eliot's *Family Reunion*", and received the reply: "Well, I don't think it's being held here, madam. . . ." This demonstrates how hard it is to communicate when you fail to cooperate with, or for some reason fail to get cooperation from, the other party. The customer ought to have said something like "I've come for a book, written by T. S. Eliot, and entitled *The Family Reunion*", perhaps adding the name of the publisher. But the poor woman imagined she was in a bookshop.

Tellingly, Randolph Quirk quotes the opening of Patrick White's novel, *The Twyborn Affair*, as an example of "strategies of beginning":

> "'Which road this afternoon, Madam?'
> 'The same, Teakle—the one we took yesterday.'
> 'Bit rough, isn't it?' her chauffeur ventured.
> 'We Australians', Mrs Golson declared, 'are used to far rougher at home.'"

We learn at once that Mrs Golson is an Australian; that the present location is somewhere other than Australia; and that Mrs Golson must be well off, since she has a chauffeur. We also learn the chauffeur's name and we gather, from the employer's mode of address, that he is most probably a man. A lot of information has been conveyed in a short space, not counting the time of day, the roughness of the road, the fact that roads are even rougher in Australia, and the chauffeur's considerateness (either for Mrs Golson or for the car). All this with the minimum cooperation demanded from the reader.

Style, Swift said, means proper words in proper places. On appropriateness of language, Sir Randolph provides a bad, browbeating example, a passage from an insurance policy—

> "If the Insured submits to the *X* Insurance Company a written proposal . . . and if the particulars therein set forth are accurate, and if the Insured pays to the Company the premium for insurance. . . ."

[3] *Words at Work: Lectures on Textual Structure*. By RANDOLPH QUIRK. Longman, £5.75.

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—and a good, ringing example, from the charter granted to a constituent College within the University of London. Beginning "Elizabeth the Second by the Grace of God . . .", the latter reads in part:

> "NOW THEREFORE KNOW YE that We by virtue of Our Prerogative Royal and of Our especial grace, certain knowledge and mere motion have willed and ordained and by these Presents do for Us, Our Heirs and Successors will and ordain as follows . . .",

and concludes: "BY WARRANT UNDER THE QUEEN'S SIGN MANUAL". However exotic ("There are the French grammatical calques, as in the postposed adjective *manual*"), however untypical of prose composed in the year 1980, the text "illustrates . . . unambiguously the fundamental principles of appropriacy in language". These principles are of course open to abuse: as when one language is employed in addressing the rich or the powerful, and another used for the poor or the powerless.

On linguistic sexism and the constraints we ought to recognise and respect, Sir Randolph makes the right-minded noises, taking to task an entertainer who expressed himself: "My ambition is to have . . . a family show. People would bring their wives, mothers and children", thus betraying the unconscious assumption that "people" are always male. "Spouses" would be an improvement on "wives", but so would "parents" in place of "mothers", for why should fathers be discriminated against? Quoting the statement "There were two Singaporeans on the plane", he remarks that, out of context, nationality names will connote males only, though I think I would have guessed at a married couple in this case. How easy it is to fall foul! And foul is what Funk will fall without fail, for in one of his books he utilises the pronoun "she" when elucidating the expression *back-seat driver*. In the other he repeats an old joke about the three ways of spreading news rapidly: telegraph, telephone, or tell a woman.

All the same, I would see no good reason to go along meekly with the 1984 resolution of the Association of University Teachers that in all its future dealings the word *manpower* should be replaced by *work-force* and *man-made* by *artificial*, and that the adjective *manly* should be avoided altogether.

Such proscriptions and prescriptions smack of bullying, and to yield to them is unmanly.

AUTHORS

Howard Hodgkin, one of Britain's foremost painters and winner of the 1985 Turner Competition, was a Trustee of the Tate Gallery from 1970-76 and of the National Gallery 1978-85. He trained at Camberwell School of Art and Bath Academy of Art, and his works have been bought by, among others, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Fogg Art Museum, the Carnegie Institute Museum of Art, the Edinburgh Museum of Modern Art, and the New York Museum of Modern Art. His painting on the cover is *Venetian Glass*, oil on wood, 1984-87, size 34 × 42.5 cms (© 1987 by Howard Hodgkin, courtesy Knoedler, Inc., New York). He writes:

> "The reason why my pictures take so long to paint is that they begin often with something which is visually representational. They have to go on to turn into something which is visually self-sufficient, physically self-sufficient. . . . I go back and look in the most complete way to the subject I started out with. So I have to go out from what is really realism, and can truly be described as a kind of literal realism, to something which is almost the opposite.
>
> "I use a very simple language, as I use very few elements, which on the whole is extremely easy to execute, and sometimes very quick to execute; the problem is to give this language meaning. The meaning comes from a very elaborate series of interrelations. In some cases I can repaint one part of the picture again and again and again. Its effect on the other parts of the picture is of course what matters.
>
> "The role of the titles is complicated, in that often they mislead people, and lead them to expect things that they are unable to see in the picture. . . . The picture is finished and looks after itself, as it were, when the subject matter has turned into an object. . . .

Jack Curtis, born in Kansas in 1922, has published six collections of poems, including, in Spanish and English, *Obra Reciente* (La Chachora, La Paz, 1985); five novels (the most recent, *Some Salty*, was published in 1987 by Dell), and many short stories and screenplays. In 1979 he received the All Nations Poetry Award.

George Szirtes's latest book of poems is *The Photographer in Winter* (Secker & Warburg, 1986).

Elizabeth Jennings's volumes of poems include *Moments of Grace* (1980), *Extending the Territory* (1985), which won the W. H. Smith Award, and *Collected Poems* (1986). All are published by Carcanet, who next year will bring out *The Sonnets of Michelangelo*.

Gillian Tindall is a novelist, biographer, and historian. Her latest novel, *To the City*, was published earlier this year by Hutchinson; her biographies of George Gissing (*The Born Exile*) and of Bombay (*City of Gold*) were brought out in 1974 and 1982 by Maurice Temple Smith, and *Rosamund Lehmann: An Appreciation* in 1985 by Chatto & Windus. She is currently working on a book on the meaning of place to writers.

Christopher Tugendhat, a former Vice-President of the European Commission, is now Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority and of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House). His most recent book is *Making Sense of Europe* (Viking, 1986).

Marghanita Laski is a novelist, critic, and journalist. She was a member of the Annan Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Broadcasting (1974-77), and as a member of the Arts Council of Great Britain has served on its Drama and Literature Advisory Panels and its Visiting Arts Unit. Her latest books are *From Palm to Pine: Rudyard Kipling Abroad and At Home* (published last spring by Sidgwick & Jackson), *Kipling's English History* (reissued by BBC Publications), and *George Eliot* (Thames and Hudson).

Edward Pearce is a columnist for *The Sunday Times*, and author of two volumes of sketches of Parliamentary personalities, *The Senate of Lilliput* and *Hummingbirds and Hyenas* (Faber, 1983, 1985). His collection of essays *Looking Down on Mrs. Thatcher* (Hamish Hamilton, 1987) includes several of his ENCOUNTER articles.

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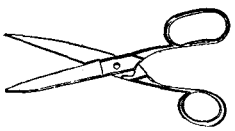
Life & Letters Today

Washington, D.C.



UPLIFT: **Some in Washington are mystified at the flap over Senator Joseph Biden borrowing paragraphs from Neil Kinnock. Few politicians speak their own words and many dip into the eloquence of others at some time or other.**

Even Lincoln lifted "government of the people, by the people and for the people" from John Wycliffe, an early translator of the Bible; and Churchill appropriated "blood, toil, tears and sweat" from John Donne. Churchill also failed to credit the original author of "Iron Curtain", and who can blame him. It turns out to be—Omigod—Joseph Goebbels.

DAILY MAIL

London

QUOTE UNQUOTED: *It is perhaps as well for Paul Barker that neither E. M. Forster nor L. P. Hartley are still around to read his article.*

If they were, he might be in need of a "Go-Between" to explain to Hartley how his most famous opening line—"The past is another country—they do things differently there"—came to be attributed to Forster!

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

London

DISEASES: **The need to invent names for new diseases is mercifully rare [writes John Ayto].**

But the most bizarre is surely "syphilis". In 1530 Girolamo Fracastoro, a Veronese physician, wrote a poem about an unfortunate shepherd named Syphilus, supposedly the first person to catch the disease (then usually known as the "French disease" or "French pox"). He called the poem "Syphilis", and the name has been with us ever since.

THE OBSERVER

London

LITERARY MURDER: *Alistair Maclean's skill as a plotsmith has brought him widespread posthumous acclaim but his writing, particularly in recent years, did not always keep pace.*

The 1980 thriller "Athabasca"—which became Maclean's fourth biggest seller—was unpublishable in submitted manuscript form. So muddled were some of the sequences that Collins, his publishers, had to import a writer to sort them out and write passages to "bridge" them into the novel.

Maclean's editor for five years recalls: "Like the majority of authors he needed a degree of tidying up—but there were many hilarious moments.

"I told him I thought there were too many women around the hero in 'Goodbye California', and he replied: 'Well, kill one off then'.

"Maclean never liked checking the final proofs and when he saw the book he said to me: 'You killed off the wrong one'."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

VANITY FAIR: **Mr Robert Maxwell, the publisher, has decided to bow to overwhelming pressure and with great regret allow the name of his "British Printing & Communication Corporation" be changed to the simple "Maxwell Communication Corporation" [Raymond Snoddy reports].**

"It's not an ego trip. I don't go in for ego trips. It's not my style. It was a decision reluctantly taken. I was forced into it by my colleagues", said Mr Maxwell modestly yesterday.

Mr Peter Jay, Mr Maxwell's chief-of-staff, explained the pressure from outside was irresistible.

"People said: 'We have read about you. We all know about you. For God's sake, even if it is personally embarrassing you have got to get your name in the name of the company'."

So Mr Maxwell said yes.

FINANCIAL TIMES

London

WEATHERMAN: *Hurricane winds devastated London and the South today leaving a trail of death, damage, and disruption. Weathermen failed to give decent warning of the hurricane-force winds. It was only around eleven last night that they realised there could be Force 11 storms.*

BBC weatherman Ian McCaskill was eating his words today after telling the nation to expect a day of normal autumn weather. On BBC lunchtime news yesterday he made fun of a woman viewer who telephoned with a hurricane warning. He laughed: "Fortunately I don't think we shall have anything like that."

This morning he stayed home in Seer Green, Buckinghamshire—virtually cut off by fallen trees.

LONDON EVENING STANDARD

London

THEOLOGY: **Quite a few people are convinced that it exists [Wendy Cope writes] and many more would like it to. Some apparently sane individuals claim to have seen it with their own eyes. Believers are inclined to assume that it must be benign. The Loch Ness monster has a lot in common with God and it seems unlikely that anyone will be able to prove or disprove the existence of either.**

THE SPECTATOR

London

NAME OF GAME: *What's the simplest name for a word-processor [asks Godfrey Smith]?*

I liked **grammar-slammer** *but it's too long;* **logo** *is neat but has another meaning;* **lexy** *combines Greek roots with a modern ring;* **motto** *is slick;* **wordy-gurdy** *is jolly;* **wompom** *is a happy echo of the great Flanders & Swann who featured it in a song.*

I thought **texticle** *a bit saucy and* **riter** *almost there. But I enjoyed most this week a letter from three girls who run the City of London Sinfonia so successfully. They call theirs* **"TM"—Token Male.**

SUNDAY TIMES

London

FULL HOUSE: **Book collecting has no boundaries; it is a measure of the imagination and knowledge of the collector usually, but not always, controlled by practical considerations [Ben Weinreb writes]. Not, for instance, in the case of Richard Heber (1773-1833) who said:**

> **"No gentleman can be without three copies of a book, one for show, one for use, and one for borrowers."**

When he died, his books filled six houses.

THE TIMES

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PHILOSOPHICAL PURSUITS

The Truth in Painting
JACQUES DERRIDA
Translated by Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod

Is painting *in itself* the truth? Does painting *represent* the truth? Is there a truth *peculiar to* painting? Is there a truth *as regards* painting? These are the questions Derrida pursues here. Whether interested in philosophy, literature, or art, readers of this work will be forced to reassess the ways in which they describe, discuss, or see painting. 63 halftones

The Post Card
From Socrates to Freud and Beyond
JACQUES DERRIDA
Translated by Alan Bass

In this satire of epistolary literature, "Literature, philosophy, and psychoanalysis—the pillars of proprietary meaning—are exposed to all the detours and random destinations of a mischievous mail. The humble postcard thus becomes an emblem of pure, utopian textuality: a message without permanence or serious intent, an object of happy speculation."—Christopher Norris, *Times Literary Supplement* 1 color plate, 5 halftones

Deconstruction and Philosophy
The Texts of Jacques Derrida
Edited by JOHN SALLIS

This is the first sustained attempt to relate Derrida's work to the Western philosophical tradition from Plato to Heidegger. Essays by twelve leading Derridean philosophers and a paper by Derrida himself—previously unpublished in English—retrieve for philosophy per se the significance of deconstruction.

Frontispiece of Prognostica Socratis basilia: courtesy of Bodleian Library, Oxford

Is There a Measure on Earth?
Foundations for a Nonmetaphysical Ethics
WERNER MARX
Translated by Thomas J. Nenon and Reginald Lilly

"Based on long-standing experience studying the thought of Heidegger and carrying it further, Werner Marx has laid out the skeleton of an ethics and a foundation for an ontological ethics that would not have been possible within the limits set by Heidegger himself. This further elaboration alone, and even more the fact that this kind of a foundation for ethics is not really present in current discussions, should guarantee the book the concentrated and thought provoking attention that it merits." –Klaus Düsing, *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, reviewing the German edition

Sartre's Second Critique
RONALD ARONSON

The second volume of Sartre's *Critique de la raison dialectique*, eagerly awaited and unfinished at his death, was published in French in 1985 and is still unavailable in English. Aronson was among the privileged few who had seen the manuscript. He now explicates and comments on this historic work, leading the reader through its dense terrain, proposing a provocative solution to problems Sartre left unresolved, and suggesting unexpected areas where dialectical thought remains useful.

The Philosophy and Politics of Freedom
RICHARD E. FLATHMAN

In this outstanding contribution to the debate between "negative" and "positive" conceptions of freedom, Flathman mounts an impressive argument for the negative but, by rejecting a mechanistic view and insisting on the meaningful character of agency and actions, he boldly embraces elements found in the positive. "[This book] will have considerable and deserved impact on one of the most important and long-standing issues in political philosophy."—James Fishkin

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